

Why Do Some Adults Change Their Minds about What Is  
Important in the Visual Arts? A Case Study

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## Abstract

This case study used ethnographic methodology. The research project was an introductory study of one adult's present and past experiences with the visual arts, exploring, in particular, the causes and processes that were related to the individual's changes of mind in order to develop an understanding of why that individual had changed her mind about what was significant in the visual arts. The individual who provided the data was a solid supporter of art galleries: female, middle-aged, graduate of university and college, married with two children, and living in an urban community. The data were collected from two informal conversational interviews and from a written description of one change experience selected by the participant. The individual had positive experiences with art during early childhood, in elementary and secondary school, during university, in avocational drawing and painting studio courses, and in aesthetic experiences. All of these experiences have had individual effects and, together, they have had a cumulative effect on the development of the participant's opinions and ideas about the visual arts. The experiences which had the most effect on the development of the individual's perspectives on the visual arts were hands-on studio, educational, and aesthetic experiences. Further research is suggested to investigate why some adults change their minds about the visual arts.

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## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

Why do some adults change their minds about what they believe is meaningful and important in the visual arts? This study was intended to identify and interpret experiences which have provoked the transformation of some adults' assumptions and opinions regarding the visual arts. Such experiences might involve, for example, an aesthetic experience with an artwork, a personal desire for change, a convincing lecture, or a hands-on studio experience. If these experiences can be described, then they may become useful sources of information for the design of aesthetic education programs intended to facilitate the development of adults' abilities to interpret artworks. The information would be valuable for art educators in museums, galleries and schools. If we can learn more about why adults change their opinions about the visual arts, then we can plan more effective support for adults while they are learning about the visual arts.

### Background

Working as an artist and art educator has provided me with many experiences involving the passion and mystery that individuals associate with art. Looking back on the reactions of different people to various artworks, I am struck by the power and diversity of their responses:

engagement, indifference; insight, confusion; growth, regression; euphoria, sadness; and more. I wonder at such multiplicity. Three personal projects have played critical roles in the development of this research undertaking. The following sections summarize the projects and their influence.

### Difficult Art:

#### Controversy Is in the Mind of the Beholder

In 1990, I began to conduct a series of workshops and seminars which explored the notion of why people find some visual artworks controversial or difficult to understand. The workshops encouraged participants to recount and discuss personal experiences with what they believed to be difficult or controversial artworks. The participants' stories led me to the following assumption regarding humans' responses to visual art: Meaning is in the mind of the viewer. A single work of art will induce a range of reactions among viewers. For example, Barnett Newman's non-objective painting "Voice of Fire" provoked positive and powerful spiritual responses for some, angry arguments against the value of such a work from others, and from many others, bemused confessions such as "I don't get it, what's it all about?"

Understanding, or not understanding, a work of art did not seem to be as much a factor for offense and controversy as how the individuals dealt with their feelings. When some

people felt they did not understand a work, they would ask questions or look for more information while others would attack the art gallery or the artist's integrity when they found no appropriate meaning in the artwork. Negative responses to artworks seemed to be less a function of the understandability of the art and more a function of how the viewers dealt with life's experience generally. It became clear that there are significantly different ways of understanding art and life experience. The idea that individuals can have fundamentally different views of the world based on different assumptions about life, the world, and reality gained concrete validity for me while I was involved in these workshops.

#### Aesthetic Development and Transformative Learning

Early in the winter of 1993, during a graduate course on adult education, I began a limited investigation (Wale, 1993a) into the connections among selected theories of aesthetic development, some hierarchical models for cognitive and affective learning domains, and the concept of transformative learning. The investigation was in no small way influenced by the effects that the difficult art workshops had had on my thinking. I had been convinced of the validity of different world views and thus of differing interpretations and values of artworks; however, I felt that some interpretations were somehow better than others. At

that point I was unable to say why I believed this. It was an intuitive insight that pointed me to my next important investigation.

I had expanded the workshop focus to include magnificent art because I saw my interest as focused on the power of the aesthetic experiences, and significant experiences involved both negative (difficult) and positive (magnificent) responses. I wanted to understand these important aesthetic experiences more completely because I assumed they would have had greater influence on the opinions of individuals.

In order to analyze and compare the contents and structures of the various developmental theories (cognitive, affective, and aesthetic) I drafted a rudimentary, generic model which integrated what I believed to be the key elements of cognitive and affective development. This generic development theory integrated Bloom's cognitive hierarchy and the affective hierarchy developed by Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1964, cited in Cranton, 1989, pp. 40-46).

In the generic theory, Level One would be characterized by an ability to recognize and recall facts. The individuals would attend to information and be aware of and willing to receive a value, belief or attitude. No comprehension of the facts or values is implied and the individuals do not respond to their perceptions.

Individuals at Level Two would respond to information presented. Now they understand facts and are able to demonstrate comprehension of the information. Although the individuals do not demonstrate a commitment to their response, they do express either in a positive or negative manner and will express some opinion, interest, enjoyment, or attitude on the issue.

In Level Three the individuals would apply previously learned knowledge in new situations. They use rules, principles, or other basic knowledge in solving problems or in any new context. Certain values, beliefs and attitudes are preferred and acted upon consistently by these individuals. They demonstrate a commitment to selected beliefs, values, and attitudes that they know, understand and prefer. These form the foundation for the individuals' behaviours.

At Level Four the individuals would be able to compare and contrast ideas. Now the component parts of a content area can be "taken apart," identified, understood, and seen in the context of other similar components. And these individuals can put together information, concepts, values, beliefs and attitudes into a system. Furthermore, they can determine the interrelationships among ideas and will select those that are preferred for integration into the individuals' complex systems of knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes (see Table 1).

Table 1:

Generic Aesthetic Development Model

Levels	DOMAINS: Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor
Level Four	<p>Able to compare and contrast ideas.</p> <p>Integrates new ideas into own complex systems of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge.</p>
Level Three	<p>Applies previously learned knowledge in new situations.</p> <p>Prefers certain values, beliefs, and attitudes.</p>
Level Two	<p>Can understand facts and demonstrates comprehension.</p> <p>Expresses, positively and negatively, interests, opinions, and attitudes but without commitment.</p>
Level One	<p>Able to recognize and recall facts.</p> <p>Willing to receive a value, belief, or attitude.</p>

This generic model is intended to reflect my assumption that individuals' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains are all active at once, if the individuals are alive and conscious. I believe that the domains are interconnected and interactive. The fact that one domain or another dominates, or seems to during and after experiences, does not mean that the other domains are inactive.

There is fundamental congruence between this generic model and the aesthetic development theories of Housen (1983) and Parsons (1987). This is especially evident in the highest levels where the individual can put together information, concepts, values, beliefs and attitudes into a system, using both personal and external perspectives, to find a more complete and deeper understanding of the art experience. Progressing from level to level, individuals move from recognition to understanding, to application, to analysis, and to reconstruction and creation of knowledge and beliefs; from self-centred perspectives to appreciation of and interest in others' points of view. I believe that the aesthetic development theories build on existing cognitive and affective theories in a complimentary and rational manner.

While I was exploring these aspects of developmental theory, I found myself increasingly drawn to questions that related to the investigation but seemed well beyond the scope of my efforts. For example, how does an individual



progress from recognizing, to understanding facts? How does an individual develop from receiving to expressing opinions and attitudes? What causes an individual to be interested in something, to enjoy it? How does an individual move from understanding the facts of a familiar situation to being able to use some previously learned facts in a new situation? What happens to move a person from simply expressing opinions to developing a preference for certain opinions and, similarly, from displaying various attitudes to choosing and maintaining certain preferred attitudes? How does an individual move from using previously learned knowledge in new situations, to being able to analyze knowledge, to being able to take it apart and develop a deeper comprehension, to being able to understand the interrelationships among facts and ideas, to being able to develop new relationships among ideas and, finally, to new knowledge?

I was pleased with the explanation that these developmental theories suggested for the diverse responses that I had encountered in the workshops. The theories explained idiosyncratic interpretations of artworks and justified changes of an individual's understanding over time. However, I found myself still wondering about how, when, and why an individual would move from one level of development to another; what made him/her change? Was the trigger for the transition a significant aesthetic

experience? Did, for example, those memorable experiences recounted in the difficult and magnificent art workshops have the potential to change the opinions of those who had the experiences?

I assumed that for an individual to acquire, develop and use knowledge, the individual had to have accepted, on faith, some assumptions and concepts, whatever they may be, and that these had become the foundation of the individual's body of knowledge. Furthermore, moving from one phase of development to another, by definition, requires learning, and, insofar as that learning involves the acquisition of new assumptions, theories, or beliefs, the learner has to undergo what Mezirow (1990) has named a transformative learning experience. Transformative learning can thus be seen as the concept that connects one stage to another, explaining how an individual moves from one level to another in a cognitive development theory. The transformation from one stage of development to the next probably occurs slowly and an individual would exhibit characteristics of both stages simultaneously. Very little time might be spent at any single level of development. Most of an individual's life may be spent in the processes of transformation (see Figure 1).

In Housen's model, the lower level stages of development, the Accountive, Constructive, and Classifying Stages seem to correspond to Mezirow's (1990) meaning

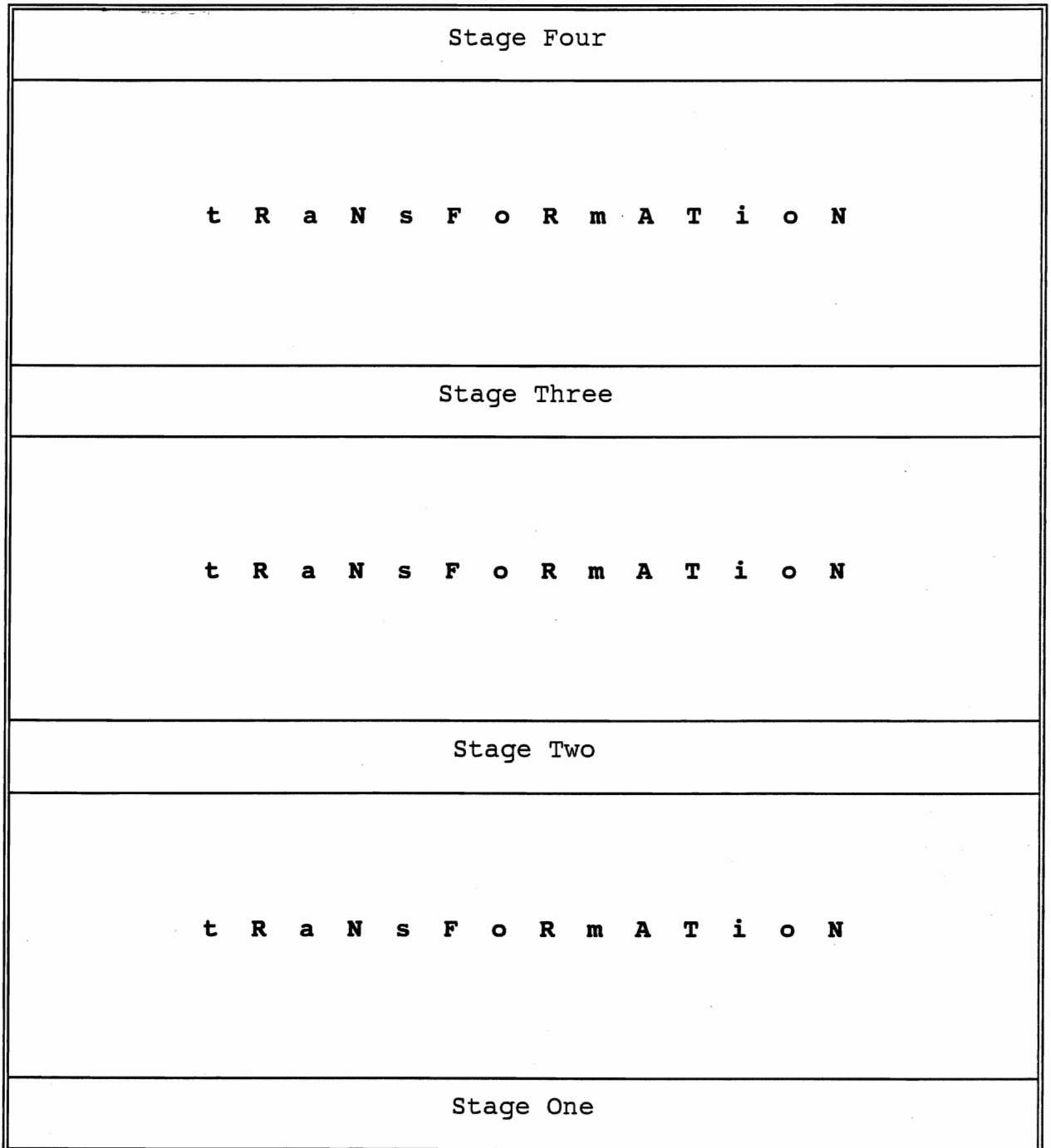


Figure 1: Transformative learning links cognitive development stages.

schemes: that is, "sets of related and habitual expectations governing if-then, cause-effect, and category relationships as well as event sequences" (p.2). Meaning schemes give the individual "habitual, implicit rules for interpreting" (Mezirow, 1990, p.2) experience and making meaning of it. Mezirow's meaning perspectives, "higher order schemata, theories, propositions, beliefs, prototypes, goal orientations and evaluations" (Mezirow, 1990, p.2) appear to correspond to Housen's higher level Interpretive and Creative Reconstructive Stages.

Housen's (1983) model defines the Stage 2 viewer as wanting "to construct a framework for understanding the work of art" (p.179) and at Stage 3 the viewer "wants to both refine and augment that framework" (pp.179-180). The viewer's interpretation of the artwork begins with a concern for what is signified ("what is it?"), and then grows to include an investigation of how the artist has created the effects within the work of art. This analysis is based, largely, on how well the artwork represents the world as perceived by the viewer; that is, a successful painting of a tree looks like a tree that the viewer has seen in the world. Next, the viewer modifies his/her interpretive framework to incorporate the concerns of the traditions of art such as style, school, art theories and art history.

As viewers progress through Housen's (1983) developmental model, their frameworks change from an

egocentric perspective to an ever more complex multiple perspective. Each stage has a "distinct and logical framework reflecting coherent patterns in the viewer's understanding of the aesthetic object" (p.178). This clearly echoes Mezirow's concepts of meaning perspectives, critical reflection, and transformative learning. Such a framework used to clarify aspects of the art object would be a meaning scheme or perspective in Mezirow's theory.

Lower levels of cognitive learning are achieved and surpassed through the acquisition, basic understanding, and application of facts whereas the higher levels of cognitive learning, synthesis and evaluation, may be invoked by the disorienting dilemma or the critical incident. Mezirow (1990) has stated that "most meaning perspectives are acquired through cultural assimilation" (p.3) and that others, like cubism and colour field painting, may be intentionally learned. Still others are stereotypes that we have unintentionally learned: for example, what it means to be an artist or non-artist and what is "good art" and "bad art."

If transformative learning is a concept which can be used to explain the link between one cognitive stage of aesthetic development and another, then I felt I must present a valid and believable argument which defined the aesthetic experience as a learning experience, thus having the potential of transformative learning.

### Aesthetic Experience Model

Throughout the summer of 1993, I worked on the design and definition of my concept of the aesthetic experience (Wale, 1993b). As I progressed through the exercise, I found it necessary to clarify my assumptions about the underlying questions, "what is art?" and "what is aesthetics?" The next section presents the results - my operational definitions for art, aesthetics, and the aesthetic experience as a learning experience.

North American adults have personal definition(s) of art. When asked about art, they have some idea what is being asked and can discuss their personal experiences with what they call art and what they believe society calls art. Their personal definitions may be more or less developed according to the needs of each individual; for example, in our society, the needs of a commercial art dealer are different than an art historian's and so are their definitions of art. Similarly, the young violin protégé and the retired factory worker define art differently. I suggest that their definitions are constructed under the influence of two key forces, the self and society; furthermore, individuals change their definitions over time, through accumulated experiences and with learning.

Our collective concept of art becomes our society's definition. This societal definition, in reality, is dynamic and multifaceted: constantly being challenged,

defended and changed. An analysis of the social forces which affect the societal definition of art is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is important to note that in our society there seems to be an interactive relationship between the evolving definitions of the individual and the society.

Despite this argument for dynamic definitions of art and for individualistic perspectives on art, I maintain that there is evidence for some universal sense of art, not for a definition that describes the limits of what art is -- its content, its material, its style and so on -- but for a definition that sets out what art is for. I do not believe that any culture will achieve any art that will be art for all peoples for all time. Rather, I am suggesting a metatheory which proposes that art be understood as a truly integral and natural aspect of the nature of each individual, of all cultures throughout time, and thus of humanity.

The main support for this position is provided by Dissanayake (1988, 1992). In an extensive review of philosophical, anthropological, psychological and biological positions, Dissanayake (1992) proposed that from a bio-evolutionary or species-centred perspective "one can claim that art is more important - primal and perduring - than has ever before been recognized or demonstrated, insofar as it originated from and played a critical role in human

biological adaption" (p.xvii). She argued for art to be considered as a human behaviour which satisfies a human need and defines art as "the activity of making the things one cares about special" (p.223). This proposition explains the persistent occurrence of art, in a variety of manifestations, in diverse cultures, over time. This definition of art seems capable of including all classifications and associated definitions of art, contemporary and historical, avant garde and traditional, amateur and professional.

Insofar as we all have some personal definition of art and artworks, we all have aesthetic experiences in our lives. For most of us the quality of our aesthetic experiences tends to improve as the quantity of these experiences increases.

Aesthetics is the human response to artwork(s). Aesthetic experience, a special type of human experience, is enmeshed within human life, within human experience, and in some sense helps to define the nature of humanity. Historically, the study of aesthetics has investigated what were described as the special qualities of art; these included expression, beauty, representation, unity, harmony, consummation, and emotional fulfillment. I suggest that the study of art and aesthetics should encompass all these qualities, *plus* all other values and meanings that individuals might assign to their individual experiences



with art. In addition, the remarkable tendency of individuals to change their minds about art or, perhaps more precisely, to develop their abilities to find meaning in art, warrants consideration within such study. As Housen (1983) stated, "The arts are a fundamental way of knowing oneself and the world, a way which is a distinct strand of human growth... a theory of aesthetic behaviour ... must take into consideration differences in the change and growth in aesthetic understanding" (p.172).

No matter what meaning is proposed for the aesthetic, there is a consistent assumption within aesthetic theories that presumes the importance of art and the aesthetic in our lives. Many aestheticians (Beardsley (1991), Dissanayake (1988, 1992), Smith and Simpson (1991)) argued, from different assumptions, that art and aesthetic experiences are in fact distinctive aspects of human life and that such experiences are intrinsically valuable for an individual's growth and development. Art and aesthetics, no matter how they are construed by the individual or culture, are innate aspects of humanity.

Dewey (1934) defined experience as "the interaction of an individual and his or her environing conditions, [and] is involved in the process of living and thus occurs continuously throughout life" (p.35). If experience is a continuous aspect of human life, then, for the purposes of this paper, an experience is a discrete event within the

stream of life. Such an experience may be described as having a beginning and consummation and as having a particular sequence and certain components.

The components are as follows: initial experience, reflective thinking, abstract conceptualization and experimentation. These components are loosely linked to Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). I have not examined his theory of experiential learning in any depth and, therefore, the connections to my proposed learning cycle are not clearly defined. However, I subscribe to his central idea that perception of an experience and doing something with the perception are required for learning to occur and, therefore, for knowledge to be developed.

The proposed learning cycle is described briefly in the following sentences: An individual may complete the cycle or not. If not completed in one continuous time period, the individual may resume the cycle from the subsequent component and work through to consummation in the experimentation stage after any length of interruption. Learning, personal development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, is a valuable, desirable and direct result of completion of the cycle (see Figure 2).

The initial experience combines perception and storage of perception. Perception is primarily pure sensory input of phenomena. Phenomena are things, with physical attributes, that stimulate sensory input. Storage of

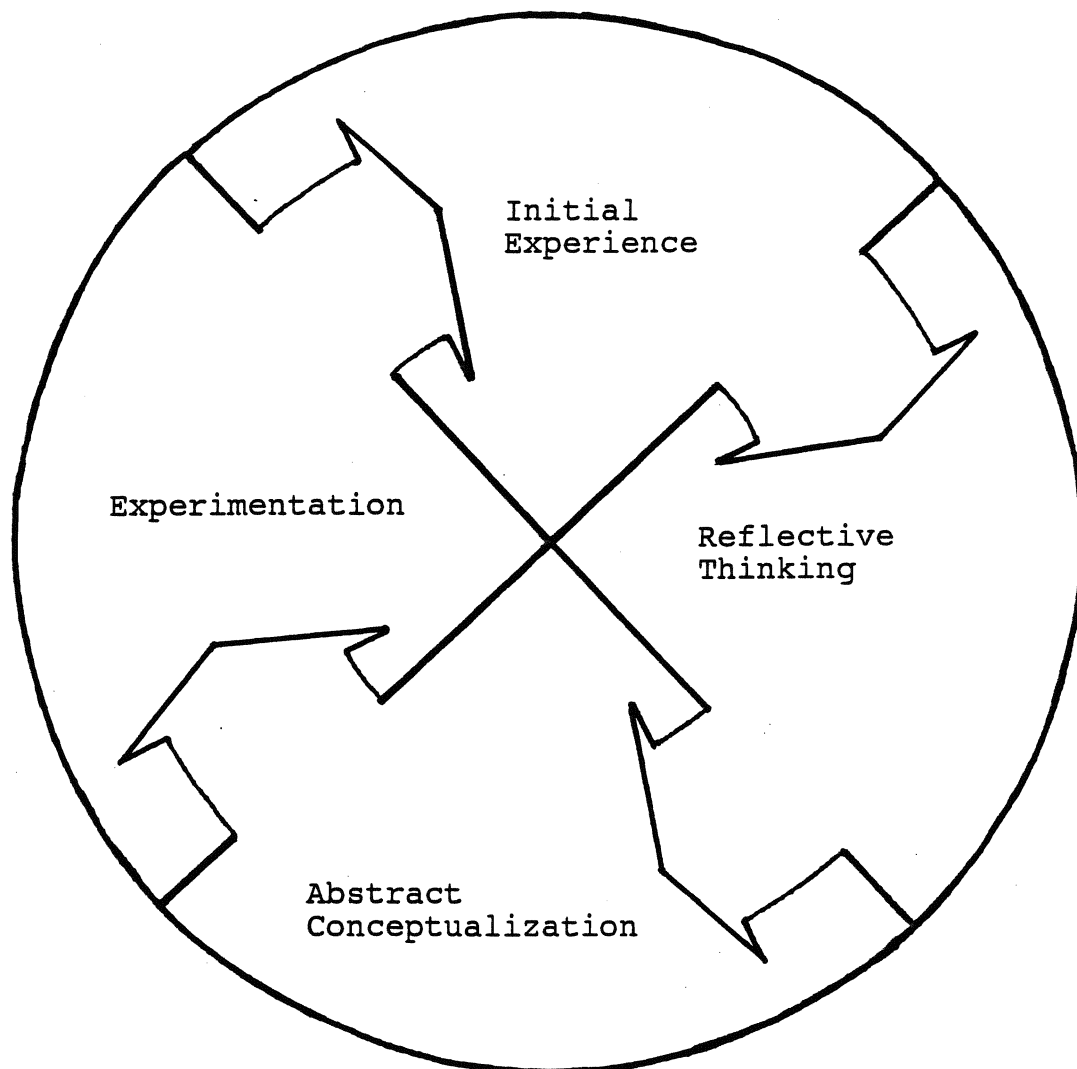


Figure 2. Aesthetic experience cycle.

perception is achieved through a physical/chemical interpretation of the input into a memory and involves the individual's cognitive and affective domains.

"Sheer sense experience, whether conscious or unconscious, without mental mediation, is aesthetically meaningless. It is *what the mind makes* of the physical sensations that is interesting and relevant" (Dissanayake, 1992, p.29). Individuals make meaning of their initial experience through consideration of their experiences. By thinking about what is perceived, by calling forth memories of the experience and the feelings and thoughts connected to the experience, and by wondering about them, individuals engage in a compulsive struggle to understand their experiences. I suggest that abstract conceptualization is the process of constructing meaning schemes and perspectives, and on occasion deconstructing and reconstructing them in order to integrate new or different thoughts. Experimentation involves the testing or use of the results of the previous three components of the cycle and thereby resumes the cycle at a new initial experience.

What has happened to an experience after consummation, that is, after the cycle is concluded? Dewey (1934) indicated that it is somehow taken into an individual's consciousness and is integrated within that individual's collection of memories. When the ideas that have been developed are in harmony with the existing knowledge of the

individual, the integration is smooth and relatively seamless. The ideas reinforce existing assumptions and related frameworks and opinions. However, when the results are not in harmony, the integration may involve struggle, conflict and some sort of suffering for the individual and can result in some reconstruction presumably of the ordering or organization of her or his set(s) of memories.

I propose that the sensory input of the initial experience is translated into one or more memories and these become the raw materials from which the individual's assumptions, meaning schemata, meaning perspectives and worldview(s) are constructed. The reconstruction to which Dewey alludes may be more completely described using Mezirow's (1990) theory of transformative learning.

Mezirow argued that individuals are compelled to find meaning in their lives. They develop sets of assumptions, meaning schemes and meaning perspectives which they use to understand their experiences and which, by definition, influence their perceptions of new experiences and subsequent reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Their meaning schemes and perspectives can undergo transformations and such transformations, normally, can be seen as development of the individual's abilities to understand more experiences more completely.

As an individual grows older and has more experiences, he/she accumulates memories. As these memories increase in

quantity and quality, they become organized as assumptions, meaning schemata and meaning perspectives and as such, they tend to increase their influence on the individual's attitude to, and interpretation of, experiences, past, present and future. Memories which an individual feels or thinks are significant will be called upon to provide information (food for thought) for his/her learning cycle. It may be that, over time, a meaning perspective tends to acquire a tendency to perpetuate itself and thus predispose the individual to reject or forget memories of experiences that threaten the assumptions embodied within the meaning perspective.

Life involves continuous cycles of learning. An individual moves from experience to reflection to conceptualization to experimentation; the experiment becomes another initial experience and the cycle resumes.

An aesthetic experience involves an individual's cognitive, affective and physical responses to artworks. Though an aesthetic experience involves these domains of the individual, the domains will probably not be distinct and distinguishable during the real time experience.

Dissanayake (1992) argued that

every mental state has cognitive,  
perceptual, motivational, and emotional  
dimensions and cannot be properly  
understood if only one of its aspects is

considered at the expense of the others.

To modern biological thinking ... a feeling or physical response is no more or less bodily than an idea, a perception, a memory, or a thought ... . Thus, the best and most comprehensive way to regard most experiences is to recognize that they are *simultaneously* perceptual, cognitive, emotional, and operational. Thoughts and percepts have emotional concomitants; emotions and percepts are mental events; thoughts and emotions are often induced by perceptions; many percepts, thoughts, and emotions presuppose or lead to action. (p.30)

It is only upon reflection, after the consummation of an experience, that we come to see one domain rather than another as the dominant feature of the experience (Dewey, 1934). While the study of aesthetic experience may artificially separate the individual's response into cognitive, affective, physical or any other dimensions, for the study to truly reflect the reality of the experience all domains and the interactions of these domains ought to be considered. Each component of the aesthetic experience involves the domains of the individual to a greater or

lesser degree. The initial experience is primarily a sensory event. Reflective thinking and abstract conceptualization involve the cognitive and affective domains extensively. When the individual initiates an experiment, it is probable that all three domains are involved (see Table 2).

All individuals have aesthetic experiences. If an individual has more experiences with works of art, then the individual tends to develop her or his ability to understand artworks. The development of this ability is related to the development of mental meaning frameworks which are used to interpret experiences; that is, as these frameworks are modified to incorporate additional assumptions and perspectives, the individual can understand experiences from more points of view.

#### Summary

Individuals have fundamentally different views of the arts based on different assumptions about life, the world, and reality. Individuals can develop their ability to understand their experiences with artworks more completely.

What causes individuals to develop their interpretive skills? A significant aesthetic experience may be a trigger for the transformation of an individual's ability from one stage to another. However, it seems obvious that there are other experiences which could act as catalysts for the



Table 2

Aesthetic experience model

	Psychomotor Domain	Cognitive Domain	Affective Domain
Initial Experience	X x	x	x
Reflective Thinking	x	X x	X x
Abstract Conceptualization	x	X x	X x
Experimentation	X x	X x	X x

transformation of an individual's aesthetic frameworks: for example, a compelling lecture, an art history book, an engaging hands-on studio experience, and so on.

Concepts of art vary in different societies. In fact, a single society can support more than one concept of what art is at any one time.

Individuals construct their personal definitions of art under the influence of two key factors, the self and society. Given the extraordinary diversity of individuals' definitions of art, is it possible to design any unifying comprehensive theory of art? I suggest that all personal and cultural definitions of art can be understood as integral and natural aspects of human behaviour and, further, that all known definitions of art are examples of human activities which make things those humans care about special.

Aesthetics is defined as the human response to art. How does an individual make meaning of an aesthetic experience? Finding meaning involves individuals in a continuous cycle of initial perception, consideration, conceptualization, and experimentation. Experimentation leads into the cycle again as an initial perception. The distinction between these two elements is blurred. The directed and purposeful experiment tends to result in selected perceptions focused on aspects of the ensuing experiences. The individual is not a sponge soaking up all

sensory inputs randomly or without purpose.

The human response involves, simultaneously, the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains. Each domain interacts with and is influenced by the others. It is unlikely that an individual would have a purely cognitive, or purely affective, or purely psychomotor, response to the experience of a phenomenon.

Is personal development or learning inevitable as more experiences are acquired? Individuals develop sets of meaning schemes and perspectives which they use to make meaning of their experiences. These meaning schemes and perspectives tend to influence the interpretation of subsequent perceptions, reflections, conceptualizations, and experimentation. It is as if the meaning schemes and perspectives acquire inertia. They can undergo transformations, and such changes, normally, can be seen as development of the individuals' abilities to understand more experiences more completely (Mezirow, 1990). Can such development occur without volition or unconsciously? What sorts of conscious efforts do individuals have to undertake in order to make meaning of new and unusual experiences? These concerns lead to the central research question for this study: Why do adults change their minds about what is important and meaningful in the visual arts?

## Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study was conceived as a means to explore those experiences which provoked the transformation of some individual adults' assumptions and opinions regarding the visual arts. If these experiences could be identified and described then they may provide important information for the development of aesthetic education programs. The information would be valuable for art educators in a variety of institutions - schools, museums, and galleries.

By learning more about why adults change their minds about what is important and meaningful in the visual arts, more effective support for adults' learning can be prepared.

## Rationale

I want to understand some of the reasons that people have for changing their minds about what is significant for them in artworks. The phenomenon interests me personally and professionally. I am employed at the Burlington Art Centre as the Curator of Programs where my responsibilities include planning and evaluating a range of art education activities: for example, gallery exhibitions of artworks, courses on how to draw and paint and seminars on a variety

of aesthetic and art historical topics. All of these programs tend to engage the participants' values and opinions regarding art and artworks and I am intrigued by the diversity of their reactions. I assume that, over some period of time, individuals change their minds, adopt different assumptions, develop different values and, therefore, form different opinions about art and artworks. I plan to collect information from people about why they think they changed their minds and then, through an analysis of that information, try to explain the transitions that individuals undergo as they develop their abilities to respond to artworks. Ultimately, I hope to use the results of that analysis in the design of educational art programs and services that would facilitate the development of individuals' abilities to respond to artworks.

I intend to study adults rather than children for two key reasons. Adults are generally more able to recall and articulate the sorts of experiences being investigated; therefore, they have more potential to provide useful data. Adults are important and influential users of art programs and services. People are adults for the longest proportion of their lives and, during this period, they make decisions that affect their own continued development as well as for their dependants. They have opportunities to influence the development of others.

In this study, the participant was asked to recall and

articulate her memories of previous experiences concerning artworks. I wanted to find out about experiences that she felt were pivotal in the transformation of the ways that she makes meaning of artworks. Would she be able to tell me why she changed her mind? This information may be valuable for art educators involved in aesthetics, criticism, and studio practice.

I have not been able to locate any study that has examined the transformation of individuals' aesthetic values. Housen (1983) and Parsons (1987) proposed extensive models of aesthetic development with descriptions of the cognitive and affective levels which are characteristic of each stage of development but do not explain how or why an individual would move from one stage to the next. It is implied that as individuals gain more experience with more artworks, they will develop their abilities to understand; however, it is also implied that there are other variables that influence the development and these are not made explicit.

Beardsley (1991) proposed an aesthetic experience model with a checklist of descriptive criteria which show the experience to be distinct, desirable, and valuable.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) proposed an aesthetic experience, essentially Beardsley's model, to be a subset of a larger family of "flow" experiences and they suggested that the development of a person's ability to achieve such

experiences can follow any number of different sequences. They argued, in direct contrast with Housen's and Parsons's prescriptive stages, that individuals can become very knowledgeable about art, capable of understanding art from a number of perspectives, by following different learning paths. Neither of these studies addressed the question of how individuals would change in order to achieve the proposed model experiences.

Dissanayake (1992) suggested that such special aesthetic experiences require the acquisition of competence through education and leisure. Learning is acknowledged as a process which can facilitate the transformation of an individual's aesthetic abilities; however, there is little information provided regarding the nature and process of learning that are required. We are left with questions such as the following: Are the learning processes for aesthetics similar to other learning processes? Will similar factors have similar effects on our assumptions and opinions in art and in other subject areas? Do we make meaning of our experiences with art in a different manner than with other domains of our lives?

#### Definition of Terms

This section highlights my thoughts and terms used

regarding the central concepts involved with the content of the research question, "Why do adults change their opinions about what is meaningful and important in the visual arts?" The following definition of terms define my fundamental ideas regarding art and learning:

### Aesthetics

Aesthetics is defined as the human response to art.

### Aesthetic Experience

An aesthetic experience involves the cognitive, affective, and physical domains of the individual responding to art. A complete experience is a learning cycle, beginning with the initial experience, then reflective thinking and abstract conceptualization, and ending/beginning again with experimentation. The meaning of these experiences is in the mind of the beholder.

Individuals can have an aesthetic experience if and only if they perceive, with one or more senses, artworks. If the individuals think about their perception of artwork and integrate those thoughts into existing memories thus forming, reforming, or reinforcing their concepts of artwork, art, or life, then the individuals, in completing the aesthetic experience cycle, have accomplished some learning. It is possible to develop individuals' abilities within each of the four component processes of the cycle.



Perception skills and abilities can be developed, and as individuals' sensing skills improve, so does the quantity and quality of sensory data available for the subsequent components of the cycle. Similarly, developing the skills of the individuals to think, to conceptualize, and to experiment will enhance the individuals' abilities to understand and to find more complete and deeper meaning within the stream of life's experiences.

### Art

From a general perspective, art is considered to be a human behaviour which satisfies a human need and is defined as "the activity of making the things one cares about special" (Dissanayake, 1992, p.223). Within various societies, nations, and timeframes, art can be understood as a culturally defined concept. Individuals construct their definitions of art under the influence of two key forces, the self and society.

### Artwork

An artwork may be an object or an event, may be of a long or short duration, may involve beauty or ugliness, may be whatever an individual regards as being a special symbol or representation of something important.

The construction and structure of a work of art is as integral to its meaning as is its literal subject matter.

By structure I refer to the selection and placement of colour, form and space, texture, and other formal concerns in the making of a work of art.

### Learning

All individuals do change their minds from time to time throughout their lives. These changes can be understood as growth, learning, and development and "will be different from one person to another but the process exists for all" (Cranton, 1994, p.93).

### Transformative Learning

This is the concept which I propose as the connection between the levels of cognitive development in aesthetic development theories. Clark (1994) provided a succinct summary of the theory of transformative learning developed by Mezirow:

Transformative learning is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights. (p.21)

## Limitations of the Study

### Nature of the Research

This study explored new territory for aesthetics. Given the unexplored nature of the research concerns, the project was limited by a lack of previous study.

### Design

The project was a case study. The findings cannot be interpreted as generalizable truths.

### Literature Review

Contemporary aesthetic development theories are concerned with the clarification of stages of development and do not address the processes which provide passage between those stages. When it is concerned with the individual and his/her response to art, the philosophy of art tends to focus on the nature of the aesthetic experience, not the transformative aspect(s) of such experiences.

### The Sample

The sample is small and selected; therefore the conclusions to be drawn from the data are limited.

The Researcher

I have little previous experience as a researcher. This was my first graduate research project of this magnitude. My experience in the arts, as an artist, educator, curator, and administrator both limits and deepens the design, implementation, and evaluation of all aspects of the study. Time seemed to shrink whenever I used it to work on this project ... though I believe that my aesthetics research will continue in a variety of projects for a number of years in the future.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Purpose of the Review

This is a preliminary review of selected contemporary aesthetic development theories and some related literature that pertains to the question "why do adults change their minds about what they believe is significant in visual art?" For the purposes of this study, I have defined contemporary literature as having been published since 1980. I will be limiting the review to the area of aesthetic education with an emphasis on theories which explain the change of mind as a result of some learning: for example, aesthetic development theories.

For many years scholars have described, analyzed, and speculated about the aesthetic experience. The diversity of their thoughts and conclusions is a testament to the complexity of the experience and a reflection of the mysteries of the nature of humanity and human existence. The contemporary studies which seem to be most directly connected to the transformation of adults' assumptions regarding the visual arts tend to integrate various disciplines: philosophy, psychology, and education for example. Significant new contemporary theories are the aesthetic development theories presented by Housen (1983) and Parsons (1987); each proposed an extensive hierarchical cognitive development model.

Parsons described a five-stage theory of aesthetic development which was created using data collected from interviews with a wide variety of individuals over a period of approximately ten years. Housen has designed a five-stage developmental model based on observations and interviews of art viewers in natural settings over a period of about seven years.

The literature review is organized in three sections: the aesthetic experience, development of aesthetic knowledge, and research on aesthetic development.

#### Aesthetic Experience

Parsons (1987) suggested that the quality of our perception and experiences of artworks can be improved by learning: more specifically, through an education that focuses on frequent exposure to works of art combined with serious consideration of those works. Such an education would also tend to enrich the character of the meanings found in aesthetic experience.

The aesthetic experience, in Parsons's theory, is a "natural aesthetic response to appearances enjoyed for their own sake" (1987, p.27). We are born with the capability and can develop it through experience and thinking.

Housen described the aesthetic experience as an unverbilized "cyclical interaction between a work of art and a viewer" (1983, p.2). For Housen, the significant issue

regarding the study of aesthetic experiences and aesthetic understanding is the combination of the cognitive and affective domains within aesthetic responses. She suggested that any definition of the aesthetic which separates the two domains "distorts the nature of the aesthetic response" (p.34). Perkins et al. (1979), Wolf and Gardner (1980), and Nelson Goodman's idea of "thoughtful feelings" were cited by Housen as support for her argument that the domains are interactive and combined within the aesthetic experience.

In her doctoral study, Housen (1983) found that the quality and complexity of individuals' aesthetic experiences were significantly affected by each of these variables - age, training, and exposure to art. This implies that the aesthetic response is a learned response and thus her concept of aesthetic development and experience is congruent with the idea that the aesthetic experience can be construed as a learning experience.

The aesthetic experience, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), is characterized as being a pleasurable or valuable heightened state of consciousness which occurs in response to paintings, sculpture, music, and other art forms and, furthermore, as being autotelic, worthwhile for its own sake. This definition of the aesthetic experience is based on Beardsley's (1991) model and is designated as a part of a larger set of experiences under investigation by

Csikszentmihalyi (1990), called flow experiences. The similarities of the two types of experience are summarized in Table 3.

I believe that aesthetic experiences which meet the criteria in Table 3 are special cases and that such experiences are relatively rare occurrences for the majority of individuals. These experiences can be regarded as examples of the highest levels of development described in the aesthetic development theories of Housen (1983) and Parsons (1987). This might be expected, given that Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson only interviewed *art experts*, directors, curators, and educators in their study of the aesthetic experience.

#### Development of Aesthetic Knowledge

Models of aesthetic experience and aesthetic development are built on assumptions about the nature and grounds of knowledge. These assumptions and the resulting ideas are the foundation and structure upon which larger theories are constructed. The epistemological implications connected to the aesthetic development theories proposed by Housen and Parsons should be reviewed. Are the foundations solid? Are the connections well made?

Housen (1983) summarized her perspective of the nature of the aesthetic knowledge, revealed some of her assumptions and gave a glimpse of her research goal:



Table 3

Comparison of Criteria Defining the Aesthetic Experience and the Flow Experience

**Criteria For the Aesthetic Experience**

Object Focus

Attention fixed on intentional field

Felt Freedom

Release from concerns about past and future

Detached Affect

Objects of interest set at distance emotionally

Active Discovery

Active exercise of powers to environmental challenges

Wholeness

A sense of personal integration and self- expansion

**Criteria For the Flow Experience**

Merging of Action and Awareness

Attention centred on activity

Limitation of Stimulus Field

No awareness of past and future

Loss of Ego

Loss of self-consciousness and a transcendence of ego boundaries

Control of Actions

Skills adequate to overcome meet challenges

Clear Goals, Clear Feedback

Autotelic Nature

Does not need external rewards, intrinsically satisfying

An aesthetic experience is very different from moral judgement, as well as from scientific thinking. The aesthetic experience, combining many faculties, merges the cognitive and the judgemental with the affective and subjective into what has been called thoughtful sensations or thoughtful feelings. The cyclical interaction between a work of art and a viewer remains an un verbalized experience which begs for analysis and measurement even as it defies standard measurement procedures. (p.2)

Housen claimed an "aesthetic experience is very different from moral judgement, as well as from scientific thinking"; however, a more compelling claim might be made by comparing aesthetic, scientific, and moral experience; aesthetic, scientific, and moral thinking; and aesthetic, moral, and scientific judgement.

Are the experiences different within each of these traditional epistemological categories aesthetic, moral, and scientific? Does thinking differ within each category? Are the judgements made in each domain different?

I think these questions must be explored more completely before the claim for a separate and unique domain

of aesthetics can be made and justified. Alternative domains have been presented for human experience and learning: for example, constructive, empirical, instrumental, interpretive, spiritual, and emancipatory. How would the aesthetic relate to them?

The investigation of the nature of the aesthetic experience should focus on the first principles and characteristics of that experience. A theoretical construct which shows the relationship of the aesthetic to other experience (or knowledge or thinking) is beyond the scope of this paper (see Table 4).

Parsons's (1987) goal was to establish a developmental account of the growth of the aesthetic domain and the sequence of stages that an individual must pass through in order to achieve higher levels of understanding. This developmental account will plot the growth of our constructions as we gradually come to understand this major area of cognition. His underlying discipline is psychology, as is Housen's.

Epistemologically, he argued that "aesthetic meanings are *sui generis* and that responding to works of art is different from responding to other kinds of objects" (Parsons, 1991, p.368). This is a view of aesthetics (and knowledge) that has a long philosophical tradition and that proposes that human cognition can be divided into three types: empirical, moral and aesthetic. Parsons "tried

Table 4

Epistemological Questions

	Experience	Thinking	Judgement
Aesthetic	A-E	A-T	A-J
Moral	M-E	M-T	M-J
Scientific	S-E	S-T	S-J

to see art as different from science, morality or religion, as a part of the human mind distinguished by its own characteristic concepts and concerns" (p.12).

He looked to concepts that are normally or commonly used in discussions about art such as beauty, expressiveness, style and formal qualities. He acknowledged his art framework as "mainstream views within the broad tradition of what is called the 'expressionist' school in aesthetics" (1987, p.13) and he named Dewey (1934), Langer (1953), Collingwood (1958), and Danto (1981) as the philosophers in this tradition who most influenced him. His intentions, to try to take art seriously, to see art as an important, separate part of the human mind, are commendable and would be supported, at least in principle, by the arts community of artists, curators, educators, critics and thinkers; however, his choice of the expressionistic school would not be widely supported. As can be seen in Table 5, this is a relatively narrow view of aesthetic theory and of what art is. Osborne (1991) proposed categories of Western art theories, organized in relation to the basic interests from which the theories are derived. Parsons's view of aesthetic theory can be seen to be focused on a narrow section of Western aesthetics within Osborne's categories.

I wonder, if some aesthetic theory has to be used, whether or not Parsons ought to search for some sets of common assumptions and values among contemporary aesthetic

theories. These, like the common viewpoints of the cognitive development scholars whom he identified, would provide a stronger component for his theoretical framework. Furthermore, the search should probably consider a broad arts spectrum rather than remain restricted to paintings, in order to work toward the creation of a theory that would be applicable to a wide selection of art works -- visual art, literature, music, drama.

Would the current pluralistic views of art make selections of any common criteria or concepts impossible? Theoretical stances based on gender and culture issues, to name but two, challenge the fundamental assumptions of many traditional concepts and theories of beauty and quality. How can we get around this problem? Housen (1983) suggested that many gallery visitors do not talk about art in conventional aesthetic categories such as "form, color, expression, subject matter, content, style, composition, or communication" (p.46). She recommended, therefore, that traditional aesthetic distinctions be avoided when analyzing the aesthetic experiences of individuals and, consequently, she believed, research methodologies would be improved.

Housen conducted an extensive review of the literature on aesthetic understanding from a developmental perspective (Housen, 1979). She described the historical investigations of the aesthetic experience, by most philosophers and psychologists, as based on information from "the experienced

Table 5

Osborne's Categories of Western Art Theories**PRAGMATIC INTEREST: INSTRUMENTAL THEORIES OF ART**

- 1) Art as manufacture
- 2) Art as an instrument of education or improvement
- 3) Art as an instrument of religious or moral indoctrination
- 4) Art as an instrument for the expression or communication of emotion
- 5) Art as an instrument for the vicarious expansion of experience

**INTEREST IN ART AS A REFLECTION OR COPY:****NATURALISTIC THEORIES OF ART**

- 1) Realism: art as a reflection of the actual
- 2) Idealism: art as a reflection of the ideal
- 3) Fiction: art as reflecting imaginative actuality or the unachievable ideal

**THE AESTHETIC INTEREST: FORMALISTIC THEORIES OF ART**

- 1) Art as autonomous creation
- 2) Art as organic unity

Osborne (1991, p.38)

artist or learned viewer" (1983, p.3). Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) have conducted a contemporary study in that investigative tradition. Both Housen and Parsons cite James Mark Baldwin as the first psychologist to attempt to introduce a theoretical framework that "concentrates on the growth in understanding of the arts from the naive viewer's perspective" (Housen, 1983, p.3). Similar to Parsons's work, Housen's aesthetic development model is an attempt to account for the experiences of all viewers.

In Housen's (1983) literature review she divided the studies on aesthetic understanding into two categories: The first type analyzed factors within the viewer's thoughts and focused on descriptive standards. The second type of study considered the developmental changes holistically. A key difference between the studies in the two categories follows: In the first category, the studies "tend to be implicitly developmental, [and] the focus is on quantitative variation of the frequency of particular categories of thought - over such variables as age or expertise" (p.11); in the second type, there is an "emphasis on a progression of qualitative differences within those thought patterns which describe stages of aesthetic development" (p.12).

The studies in Housen's first type "divide aesthetic understanding into such dimensions as 'subject matter' or 'communication'" (1983, p.11). Some of the many studies cited by Housen follow: Studies which focus on "subject



matter" included Gardner (1970), Lark-Horowitz (1937; 1938, 1939), and Rosenstiel, Morison, Silverman, and Gardner (1978); some of those that focused on "communication" included Dewar (1938), Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1969), and Wilson, (1966, 1970, 1972).

The studies in Housen's second type, looking at change holistically, were based on "broader theoretical constructs, ...look[ing] at change within the fabric of the viewer's thought" (1983, p.12). Among those cited are Brunner (1975) and Parsons (1978).

Rather than propose any unique status for aesthetic knowledge, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) argued that the structure of an aesthetic experience is special.

The aesthetic experience occurs when information coming from the artwork interacts with information already stored in the viewer's mind. The result of this conjunction might be a sudden expansion, recombination, or ordering of previously accumulated information, which in turn produces a variety of emotions such as delight, joy, or awe. The information in the work of art fuses with information in the viewer's memory - followed by the expansion of the viewer's consciousness, and the attendant emotional consequences. This process of fusion we will refer to as the structure of the aesthetic experience. Whenever

we are moved by the encounter with a work of art, our experiences will have a similar structure, even though their informational content might be completely different. (p.18)

Aesthetic information seems to be, essentially, some combination of perception, cognition, and emotion; that is, information comes "from the artwork," interacts with information "stored in the viewer's mind," and the interaction may have "emotional consequences" (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990, p.18).

The structure of this aesthetic experience is identified as the *fusion* of the information received from the artwork with the information stored in the viewer's memory. I suggest that this process of fusing may be understood as learning. Although Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson only highlight the possibilities of expansion, recombination, and ordering of memories, it is possible to imagine that existing information could also be reinforced or confirmed and that information that has no previously stored counterpart could be received. All these scenarios can be regarded as aspects of learning experiences.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) acknowledged that different viewers may have differing thoughts and emotions in response to an artwork and that the content of the experience would differ among individuals in the same culture, between cultures, and across time. They are

acknowledging a pluralistic understanding of art, and aesthetic knowledge. I suggest that their explanation of the aesthetic experience and its associated integration of information ought to be expanded to address those that are more frequent and mundane.

There are many other theories which describe and explain knowledge. A more comprehensive review of these is not possible at this time in this paper. However, I feel it is important to acknowledge the diversity of opinions and ideas regarding the nature of human knowledge. For example, King and Kitchener (1994) proposed a Reflective Judgement Model which is focused on cognition and the special thinking required for situations that have no certain or simple interpretation. This model describes the development of "epistemic cognition" (p.13) and is composed of seven stages, each of which has its distinct set of "assumptions about knowledge and how knowledge is acquired" (p.13). The model was developed in response to Kitchener and King's research into how individuals approached complex issues and troublesome problems. Application of the model to aesthetic questions (or spiritual concerns, scientific controversies, ethical issues, etc.) might be valuable. It could provide us with another position from which to consider how individuals think about artworks, especially complex and controversial works.

A very different view of knowledge was presented in

Gardner's (1991) proposal that "all human beings are capable of at least seven different ways of knowing the world ... through language, logical-mathematical analysis, spatial representation, musical thinking, the use of the body to solve problems or to make things, an understanding of other individuals, and an understanding of ourselves" (p.12). A successful investigation into aesthetic experience must somehow acknowledge and accommodate the wide range of human understandings of the world. First, the personal stories of aesthetic experience and understanding need to be heard. Later, assumptions, concepts, and theories regarding the beliefs and, possibly, knowledge, that reflect those stories may be attempted.

#### Research On Aesthetic Development Theory

Parsons (1987) believed that people respond to works of art in different ways because they understand them differently. For us to understand their responses, Parsons stated that we have to determine the underlying assumptions which influence their interpretations of art works.

They have different expectations about what paintings in general should be like, what kinds of qualities can be found in them, and how they can be judged; and these expectations deeply affect

their response. Assumptions of this kind are often implicit, not consciously brought to mind.

(Parsons, 1987, pp.2-3)

This assertion echoes Mezirow's idea of how a person makes meaning of any experience through meaning schema and meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1990).

Parsons argued that people develop ways of understanding paintings in a certain order, a developmental sequence. He argued that "young children start with much the same basic understanding of what paintings are about, and they restructure that understanding in much the same ways as they grow older. They do this to make better sense of the works of art they encounter ... . Each step is an advance on the previous one because it makes possible a more adequate understanding of art" (Parsons, 1987, p.5).

According to Parsons, the development of individuals' abilities to understand art is largely dependent on the kinds of artworks which they experience and "how far they are encouraged to think about them" (Parsons, 1987, p.5). While I agree that these factors are very influential, I suggest that there are other variables that should be considered important influences on the development of the individual's ability; for example, personality type, epistemological assumptions, and social norms. From another perspective, it could be argued that the development of an individual's ability to understand anything should somehow

contribute to the survival of the individual and/or the species. In fact, holistic scientific arguments in support of biodiversity for a healthy planet might be seen as analogous to the contemporary calls for recognition of, and support for, the importance of valuing the aesthetic experiences of all individuals whatever level of development they might be seen to have achieved.

In Parsons' aesthetic development theory, "stages are clusters of ideas, and not properties of persons. A cluster is a pattern, or structure, of internally related assumptions that tend to go together in people's minds just because they are internally, or logically, related" (1987, p.11). He was quite clear and forceful in his emphasis on this point, presumably to avoid the criticism that the theory attempts to force people to fit predetermined categories. Parsons stated that individuals use stages to understand artworks and that the stages are not labels for people. The important point here is to recognize that cognitive development theories, aesthetic development theories, and their sets of stages are constructions of assumptions and frameworks and, as such, are "analytical devices that help us to understand ourselves and others" (1987, p.11). This sounds very similar to Mezirow's concepts of meaning schemes and perspectives (1990).

Parsons' aesthetic development theory is founded on cognitive development psychology. Parsons felt that

cognitive development theories are an important part of modern thought and have had a strong influence on education. He cited Piaget, Kohlberg, Fowler, Broughton, Selman and Loevinger as well known cognitive development scholars and indicated that while there is much debate over some concerns, there are sets of common attitudes and principles shared by these theorists. Parsons used "these common attitudes and principles to analyze aesthetic experience" (1987, p.10). James Mark Baldwin (1906) is identified as the most important psychologist to have attempted a systematic cognitive developmental account of aesthetic experience; however, his work has been superceded by contemporary advances in aesthetics and psychology.

Parsons made an interesting clarification of his developmental theory: "I speak of stages of understanding in this book, though I want to claim that sequences of insights are the more fundamental idea" (1987, p.11). Within Mezirow's (1990) theory of transformative learning this idea of "insight" would be connected to perspective transformation:

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise

acting on these new understandings. *More inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspectives are superior perspectives* that adults choose if they can because they are motivated to better understand the meaning of their experience. (p.14)

Each level of aesthetic development is focused on one new, key insight in Parsons' model. Parsons did not explain the difference between understanding and insight, though it seems that insight rests somewhere between recognizing and understanding a fact or concept, perhaps being some sort of bridge or connection in a theoretical explanation of the mental process. A more complete explanation of the basic elements of an aesthetic experience would be useful for Parsons's theory; in fact, a widely accepted model of the aesthetic experience is not available (Housen, 1983).

That humans achieve more complex understandings of themselves and their world through a series of steps is a fundamental idea of cognitive development theory. As we develop, we acquire increasingly sophisticated abilities. These abilities provide us with related new insights which in turn provide newer abilities and so on, in a non-arbitrary sequence of steps.

Parsons used four topics to organize the data he collected and to structure our thinking about paintings:

- 1) Subject Matter (including ideas of beauty and of realism)



- 2) Emotional Expression
- 3) Medium, Form and Style
- 4) Nature of Judgement

He used these four because he felt that they encompass most of the interests and considerations that individuals relate when they talk about their experiences with paintings and the categories "are responsive to the stages of development ... one can identify a different version of each idea for each of the five stages of development" (1987, p.14). He used them because they are linked to ideas about art that have been taken seriously by some artists, art historians, and philosophers of art over time, specifically the expressionist school mentioned above. While each topic has five stages of development, each topic is more central at one particular stage than the other topics. "Each stage is shaped by a central new insight, and this insight centers in each case on a different topic" (1987, p.16). In Stage One, the essential concerns are an "intuitive delight in most paintings, a strong attraction to colour, and a freewheeling response to subject matter" (p.22). While Parsons argued that all topics are considered by an individual at the other stages, the idea of subject matter is central to Stage Two, expression to Stage Three, medium, form and style to Stage Four and judgement to Stage Five (see Table 6).

Parsons's theory is based on the data collected in

Table 6

Parsons's aesthetic development theory

	subject matter	expression	medium, form, style	judgement
Stage 1				
Stage 2	<b>Dominant</b>			
Stage 3		<b>Dominant</b>		
Stage 4			<b>Dominant</b>	
Stage 5				<b>Dominant</b>

interviews with a variety of people; however, it is based on a "rational abstraction" (1987, p.12), not a statistical analysis of data. He admitted that his project raises theoretical and methodological issues; but he did not specify them. Parsons has limited his aesthetic development theory efforts to the design of hypotheses which could be tested in quantitative studies. Parsons's study is primarily qualitative.

His two key concerns for this theory are that each successive stage be seen to describe an increased level of adequacy for understanding paintings and that the theory be in accord with "both our intuitive understandings of people and paintings and with the facts of how people actually talk about paintings" (1987, p.17).

Does Parsons mean by "intuitive understanding" that we understand without conscious reasoning, that something instantaneously seems right? I would argue that understanding the "something" intuitively means that our perception and our experience of the "something" conforms to our pre-existing meaning perspectives and that this sort of understanding is not a significant measure of the theory unless the "we" is composed of a significant variety of people, for example, varied by age, education, gender, culture, and by some theoretical construct like personality type.

In fact, Parsons indicated that his data were not from

a careful sample of any population. Over three hundred interviews were completed over a period of almost ten years. The interviews were with a variety of "ordinary people living in and around Salt Lake City" (1987, p.18), ranging from pre-school children to art professors.

Five or six paintings were shown to the interviewees and a set of standard topic questions were used to start the interviews. Neutral probe questions were used to prompt further clarification of interviewees' responses. The interviews were loosely structured and the best interviews seemed like genuine conversations. The questions follow:

#### Standard Topic Questions

Describe this painting to me.

What is it about? Is that a good subject for a painting?

What feelings do you see in the painting?

What about the colors? Are they good colors?

What about the form (things that repeat)? What about texture?

Was this a difficult painting to do? What would be difficult?

Is this a good painting? Why?

### Examples of Neutral Probe Questions

You said X. What do you mean by that?

Can you give me an example?

Can you say more about that?

Whereabouts in the painting do you see that?

Parsons' theory was based on quotes from people of all ages talking about art. These data, people talking about art and art experiences, were limited by the individuals' language skills. How has that affected the data? Is it implied that the development of language skills are congruent with the individuals' aesthetic development? Housen considered these questions to be important issues affecting the quality of the data and argued that "the only strategy is to try to minimize the degree to which [aesthetic response] scores reflect merely linguistic sophistication" (1983, p.37).

It is likely that the interviewers affected the responses, consciously or unconsciously. Parsons alluded to this possibility when he said that they "tried not to suggest particular answers" (1987, p.19). The selection and training of the interviewers are issues that should be addressed in order to improve the dependability of the data. In addition, the questions themselves directed the responses to the topics that have been pre-determined by Parsons. For a more effective fundamental qualitative, exploratory study, the interviews should have been more unstructured and less

directed. The responses could then have been analyzed using a variety of strategies. If Parsons's proposed topics of the aesthetic theory of expressionism were used, the study would have tested his aesthetic development theory. Seeking a strategy that was rooted in the data would have avoided some of the self-fulfilling tendency of the procedure and would provide data which more accurately reflected how people actually talk about paintings. For a more complete argument regarding the problems related to using interviews as a data collection tool within a study of aesthetic experiences see Housen (1983) chapter 2.

Housen, like Parsons, was attracted to the aesthetic problem because of the diversity of viewer response to art works:

For one work of art it is possible to find as many interpretations as there are viewers. Moreover, reactions will most likely run from the simple to the highly complex, and from the very abstract and analytical to the intensely experiential and subjective. (1983, p.1)

Housen's aesthetic development model was based on observations and interviews of art viewers in natural settings (1983, p.7). She started with a 1976 study (cited in Housen, 1983) which charted the physical movement of museum visitors. In 1977, a second study (cited in Housen,

1983) was conducted with the intention of replicating the findings of the earlier project. Using these results, Housen was able to classify visitors according to the paths they followed in the museum and according to the way they talked about their museum experiences. The difference between naive and sophisticated viewing styles was explored in another study and, given the consistent results to that point, Housen undertook a "more in-depth analysis of the protocols collected in the previous studies" (1983, p.7). This led to the development of a model of five stages of aesthetic understanding: Accountive; Constructive; Classifying; Interpretive; and Creative Reconstruction. All stages accommodate both the cognitive and affective aspects of aesthetic understanding and take into account the interaction between these two spheres of response. See Appendix A for a detailed description of these stages.

After creating the five-stage aesthetic development model, Housen went on to develop "a method for coding aesthetic responses" (1983, p.31). Her 1983 study refined a pilot scoring manual which, through coding aesthetic responses, can measure aesthetic development. The manual was tested on "a diverse population varying in age, socio-economic status, and exposure to the arts" (p.31). This system for scoring the responses of individuals to art works echoes Parsons concern for good scientific process to test aesthetic development theory and, perhaps, reflects a desire

for acceptance of the theory into the scientific community.

Parsons (1987) described his study as advancing some complex suppositions and emphasized that his was an introductory investigation into the topic. He hoped that future studies would collect what he referred to as good scientific evidence to test and modify his hypotheses.

Parsons suggested the following process:

[The process] requires the construction of a scoring system with which different persons can reliably assign a piece of reasoning about art to the same stage. This must be based on, but be more specific than, the more hypothetical account of stages. And then, ideally, the scoring system must be used on interviews conducted with the same people over many years. (1987, p.16-17)

In direct contrast to the prescriptive stages of Parsons and Housen, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) suggested that while there appears to be a "developmental trend in the interaction with works of art" (p.180), a person's development can follow any number of different sequences. They argued that individuals can become very knowledgeable about art, capable of understanding art from a number of perspectives, by following different learning paths. They said that some people do not change their minds



about art, do not develop new ways of understanding art works while other people, as they experience more art, tend to see new meanings, become more familiar with these new meanings and thus develop more complex, richer personal understandings of the art.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) suggested that the development of individuals' abilities to respond to, and to understand, art works is dependent on the individuals' openness to new perspectives of interpretation. I propose the general trait of thoughtful inquisitiveness as another necessary ingredient for development to occur.

Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson's study (1990) of the aesthetic responses of gallery and museum curators, educators and directors of collections proposed a model of aesthetic response based on a generalization of the experts' experiences. This model is a description of highly developed responses to art works, perhaps an ideal level of engagement with art from the artists' and art professionals' point of view. While it can be argued that all individuals need not have the experience of an art expert as a goal for their ultimate aesthetic experience, the study did provide an interesting framework for examining how individuals with extensive experience and education in the art profession respond to art. The framework may, in fact, provide useful tools for analyzing aspects of all individuals' responses to art.

## Summary

The idea that people respond to works of art in different ways because they understand them differently is accepted by each of the authors included in this review. The need to determine the assumptions which underlie and influence individuals' responses is also commonly acknowledged as a key to understanding those responses.

The traditional Western philosophical view of types of knowledge - aesthetic, moral, and scientific - grounds the theories of Beardsley, Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, Housen, and Parsons. Similarly, their descriptions of aesthetic experience reflect the historical Western ideas of aesthetics. The quality of an individual's aesthetic experiences tends to improve as the individual gains more experiences with works of art. We can expect that these ideas will be true and valid for individuals who have grown up within Western culture and, particularly, who have been educated within the Western school systems.

Housen and Parsons proposed aesthetic development theories that are based on the traditions of cognitive development psychology. However, they both argued that aesthetic experience and understanding are special and should not be viewed as purely cognitive processes.

Although Parsons and Housen proposed that the aesthetic is a distinct and unique domain, they both felt it is appropriate to apply scientific thinking and judgements to

their investigations of the aesthetic. This approach seems inconsistent with their claims for the nature of the aesthetic. If it is sui generis, why study it with science?

As I reflect on the theories of aesthetic development, I wonder whether or not their focus on the stages of development puts the emphasis on the wrong element. I suggest that most individuals are not, purely, at any one stage of development. Rather, they are almost always between stages - leaving one and becoming another - therefore in a state of change. Perhaps more consideration ought to be given to the processes that connect one stage to another. For example, would the transformations that bridge Levels One and Two be different from those that connect Levels Four and Five? Would these transformations differ from culture to culture, from individual to individual?

Answers to the question "why do adults change their minds about what is important in the visual arts?" are not apparent from this literature review. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson suggested that individuals can follow many different paths in the development of their understandings of artworks. The aesthetic development theories of Housen and Parsons prescribed a particular path of development; but none of these theories explain how any individual would go about the processes of developing. We are still left with these questions: How and why would an individual move from one set of opinions to any other? Why and how does an

individual-lose interest in one thing and become interested in another? Why do adults change their minds about what is important and valued in the visual arts?

The issue of the special epistemological status of the aesthetic should be pursued further. A more comprehensive review of the related literature, especially in the areas of contemporary concepts of how knowledge develops and of alternative theories of knowledge might help to clarify the status of the aesthetic.

More explorations of the human response to artworks are required. There is a need for heuristic investigation, given that few contemporary studies have been conducted into the range and diversity of aesthetic responses.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

For many years philosophers have described, analyzed and speculated about the aesthetic experience. The diversity of their thoughts and conclusions is a testament to the complexity of the experience and a reflection of the mysteries of the nature of humanity and human existence. The historical and contemporary diversity of assumptions, definitions, concerns and approaches to aesthetic research has produced a rich and stimulating body of knowledge. This diversity of thought provides the reader with the opportunity to develop a deep and complex understanding of the phenomenon from many perspectives.

Much of the contemporary research on aesthetic development has focused on cognitive and affective or psychomotor, but not cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of the aesthetic experience. This is a function of how those researchers have defined the experience. Their definitions have narrowed the focus of their research.

In this section of the paper I explore the advantages and disadvantages of some aspects of qualitative research as they apply to aesthetic experiences and the transformation of individuals' opinions regarding art. I develop guidelines for a research method that is appropriate for my concerns at this time. Other methodologies could have been employed; however, given the limitations of time and my research experience, I decided to work with a modest first

project.

The nature of qualitative research makes it difficult for the researcher to address all of the problems discussed below. Housen (1983) suggested that by establishing a set of guidelines that relate to the central concern of the study, a researcher can focus the design of a research project. The selection of such guidelines is vital since they become a critical factor for the research and periodic reviews of the guidelines would be appropriate, given the special, organic nature of the qualitative research process. The evolution of the research design is directed by these guidelines. As the research design evolves, as the research question becomes more and more focused, the researcher is obliged to make decisions within a diverse and complex range of problems and possible solutions. By articulating the researcher's central research concerns early in the process, the researcher sets realistic limits for the project. If the guidelines are developed in response to good contemporary research practice, then the data collected should be appropriate.

#### Summary of the Phases of Qualitative Research

McMillan and Schumacher (1989) presented the following

summary as the phases of good contemporary qualitative research practice:

1. State the initial focus, purpose and questions to be investigated;
2. Select a research design and site;
3. Develop a research role in the field;
4. Choose the participants, contexts, and activities after preliminary mapping of the field (purposeful sampling);
5. Choose data collection strategies (before and during data collection);
6. Select data analysis techniques (during and after data collection);
7. Select forms of data display and develop interpretations. (p.388)

In qualitative research the researcher begins by describing a foreshadowed problem. This is a general description of the participants, location, time and events to be studied. It usually also answers the questions: What happens? Why does it happen? How does it happen? The foreshadowed problem indicates the purpose of the research, the extent that previous research and theory are expected to be involved and the focus of the data collection strategies. As the data are collected, these descriptions are re-written and they tend to become more and more focused as the research progresses.

The research site should provide the opportunity to connect with participants appropriate to the research problem. If access to the site and the people is not freely available, then the researcher must make an informal or formal application, whatever is appropriate for the site and the situation. Authorization is essential for research ethics.

The researcher must choose a research role that is suitable for the purpose of the study and appropriate to the phenomenon being studied. Four possible roles for the qualitative researcher are: observer, observer-participant, participant-observer and participant. The effect of the role on the data is a critical issue. The effects of selected researcher role should be acknowledged. Dependable data will result if the influence of the researcher is acknowledged.

The qualitative researcher is concerned with the larger context of the phenomenon or site under study. This reflects the general characteristic of qualitative research being more holistic than quantitative research. The researcher seeks a sense of the whole context for the research site or phenomenon. The site context would include the numbers and kinds of people at the site, the activities in which the people engage, the physical characteristics of the site, the services provided and the schedules for activities and services. Once this holistic overview has



been developed, the researcher selects the people, situations and events that are most likely to yield useful data for the foreshadowed problem.

The researcher must choose from whom to collect data. It would be preferable to collect information from every person in the group being studied; however, this is rarely possible. McMillan and Schumacher (1989, p.395) identified the following purposeful sampling strategies for the qualitative researcher: comprehensive sampling, maximum variation sampling, network selection, extreme-case selection, typical-case selection, unique-case selection, reputational-case selection and critical-case selection. Usually, a combination of these types of strategies is used in a study. The researcher must articulate the reasons for choosing whichever strategies are selected.

Data collection and analysis strategies are flexible and should be appropriate to the preceding decisions regarding site selection, research role, and sampling. As with those previous decisions, the data collection and analysis strategies should be suitable for the research problem. The data can be collected using any of the following three qualitative techniques: observation, interview or documents. These techniques can be used singly; however, by using two or more, the researcher obtains richer data.

When using an interview technique, the first few

interviews are used to test and refine the questioning and recording procedures. At that time, any necessary changes are made to the sequence of elements in the interview. The effectiveness of the introductory stage is also evaluated and adjustments are made to ensure that the interviewer establishes rapport and trust with the participants early in the interview. This relationship is important for the success of deeper questions later in the interview.

A strategy for organizing, coding and retrieving collected data for formal analysis ought to be established early in the study. This strategy can be modified depending on the evolution of the research project.

Analysis of data in qualitative research studies is integrated into all phases of the research. This integration is an inherent aspect of the emergent nature of this type of research.

Qualitative research ... is a systematic process of selecting, categorizing, comparing, synthesizing, and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest. Throughout the process, the ethnographer qualitatively assesses the trustworthiness of the data but does not conduct formal verification for universal propositions. (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p.414)

McMillan and Schumacher (1989, p.414) suggested three

cyclical phases of data analysis which tend to be characteristic of qualitative research. The researcher is involved in "continuous discovery" throughout the entire study, identifying tentative themes and proposing concepts and mini-theories. Toward the conclusion of the data collection phase, the researcher organizes the data, develops categories and begins to enrich his/her understanding of the patterns and themes within the data. The trustworthiness of the data is assessed qualitatively in order to improve the researcher's understanding of the setting and social context.

For most qualitative studies the volume of data collected is onerous and the final selection of the central focus of the study will, on the one hand, be based on all the data collected and, on the other hand, will provide the guidelines for what data to include in the report and what to save for later.

The level of abstraction desired for the presentation of the results will also affect the content of the final report. The level of abstraction used in presenting the results will, in McMillan and Schumacher's (1989) terms, result in one of the following kinds of studies: descriptive narration, descriptive-analytical interpretation, grounded theoretical research.

Descriptive narration is ... a story of the events, based on the common sense explanations of

the participants, that synthesizes the reasons the events occurred as they did.

Descriptive-analytical narration describes, analyzes, and interprets the phenomenon. The researcher selectively analyzes aspects of human actions and events to provide explanations.

Grounded theoretical research adds a theoretical dimension to the descriptive analysis. Concepts induced from observations are derived from the data and therefore, are called "grounded" theory. (p.421)

Appendix B contains a set of guidelines for evaluating qualitative research. These guidelines provide a detailed summary of the key aspects of qualitative research as presented in McMillan and Schumacher (1989).

### The Qualitative Study of Transformative Aesthetic Experiences

Contemporary aesthetic development theories are concerned with the design and testing of aesthetic development models and with the clarification of the stages of development; however, the whys and hows of the transformation an individual undergoes when moving from one stage to the next is in need of study.

It may be that the nature and content of an individual's aesthetic experience is ultimately indescribable; however, for the purposes of this paper, I assume that individuals can describe their memories of experiences with artworks. I also assume that there are some direct connections between the development of communications skills (for example, verbal language skills and the language of drawing) and the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of an individual. This is not to say that individuals at lower levels of development are unable to have aesthetic experiences or that people at higher levels have more powerful experiences, only that their abilities to describe their experiences varies. For example, children can have significant aesthetic experiences and adults whose abilities to speak have been damaged by a stroke can have significant aesthetic experiences; but, in both cases, their abilities to speak about these experiences is obviously at a lower level of development than a "normal" healthy adult. I am interested in the design of a research model: that seeks an understanding of the human involvement with art and artworks; that considers psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains and the dynamic interactions between and among the domains; and that illuminates the construction, de-construction and re-construction of value systems and meaning perspectives.

### The Sample

The selection of participants for the study must be compatible with the focus of the research question and the research method. There must be a reasonable degree of congruence among these decisions. I assume that information from individuals regarding their real experiences provides the proper starting point for an investigation of my concerns. For this aesthetic experience research project, all adults who are capable of responding cognitively, affectively and physically to an artwork are potential participants.

Given the limitations imposed by my minimal research experience, the short time frame available for the study, and the limited financial resources available for the project, a single individual was the sample for a case study design. Two additional individuals were selected as alternates, should the original participant have been unable to complete the project.

The subject was an adult who has changed her opinions regarding what she believes to be meaningful and important in the visual arts. The investigation of the history of the changes that one individual has undergone may allow for greater insights: were the reasons for change different at different times?

The individual was typical of a group of people who are associated with the visual arts. Using the Burlington Art

Centre as the site for the study, there was an opportunity to select a person from the following groups: visitors to the galleries, students registered in studio courses, part-time artist-instructors, professional staff, members, guild members, and others. Each of these populations would be interesting subjects for study; however, visitors to the galleries may be a higher priority. A 1994 study, "The Way People Look at Art Galleries" by the Angus Reid Group, prepared for the Ontario Association of Art Galleries, reported that seventy percent of Ontario adults have visited a public art gallery in Ontario, but only twenty-seven percent have visited within the past year. Approximately seven percent of the population studied have made more than one visit, an average of 3.5, within the past year. The report went on to describe the group of the Ontario population that are most likely to have visited an art gallery as "Solid Supporters." This group represents about thirty-two per cent of the total provincial population. According to the report "Solid Supporters" are the "most positive in their attitudes towards art galleries, most likely to have visited, and unanimous in their belief that galleries should receive government funding" (p.ii). The following summary describing the key characteristics of "Solid Supporters" is based on the information provided in the Angus Reid study (1994, p.13): Solid Supporters represent 32% of the population studied; 38% of them have

visited a public art gallery in the past year; they believe that it is important to have a public art gallery in their community, that art galleries are interesting, essential, relevant, fun, and friendly, that art teaches us to be better people, and that the government has a responsibility to fund public art galleries.

The demographics of the segment identified as "Solid Supporters" were presented (1994, p.13) as follows: 46% were female, average age was 38 years, average income equalled \$52,000, 46% had completed a college or university degree, 55% were married, 57% have children, and 25% live in a rural community.

The participant for the study was selected to represent a typical "Solid Supporter" using the description provided above. Such an individual could be reasonably expected to provide useful information, in quantity and quality, regarding her experiences with art.

Since the researcher is only fluent in English, and no resources were available for translation, the subject had to be fluent in spoken and written English.

### Design

If the research purpose is to study a little-known or singular phenomenon to propose theoretical constructs



for later verification or to describe and explain in detail complex microprocesses, then a single site, a single individual, or a small group can be used (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p.182).

This study is a case study using ethnographic methodology. The research project was an indepth study of one individual's present and past experiences with the visual arts exploring, in particular, the causes and processes that are related to the individual's changes of mind in order to develop an understanding of why that individual has changed her mind about what is significant in the visual arts.

### Site

The Burlington Art Centre was chosen as the research site. Access to the Centre and its members and visitors was granted in informal discussions with the Executive Director of the Art Centre. The Art Centre provides a meaningful physical context that focuses on the visual arts and has groups of visitors, members, and volunteers which should include individual "Solid Supporters." The following information is quoted from the Art Centre's promotional material:

The Burlington Art Centre has thrived as a vital focal

point for the visual arts since 1978. It is the seventh largest public art gallery in Ontario and attracts over 65,000 visitors from Burlington, the Bay Area, Toronto, and across Ontario and the U.S.A. The exhibition and educational programs, studios and activities are essential to our community and region. The Centre is a non-profit registered charitable organization which provides free admission, seven days a week, with full accessibility for the physically challenged.

### Strategies

Practical considerations, such as the resources available for this research project, access to participants, approvals for access to the site and direction from my thesis advisor and committee helped to control the selection of the sample for the study.

The research method should be appropriate for the phenomenon and the population being studied; in this case the method should address the complete aesthetic experience. Given my assumptions regarding the aesthetic experience, the method must elicit cognitive, affective, and psychomotor responses to artworks. As far as is possible, the method should not direct or change the meaning of the participants'

responses. Every effort was made to minimize the researcher's unnecessary influence and to acknowledge and articulate the researcher's assumptions regarding the research generally.

The data collection method was directed by the respondent's experiences. Time was allowed for the respondent to delve into her memories. Most of the questioning was open-ended and, while focused by the central research concern, was as natural as possible. In order to develop a more complete picture of the participant's experiences, it was seen to be helpful to use more than one data collection strategy. In addition to the interview strategy discussed below, the participant was asked to write a description of one of the phenomena discussed in the interviews. The written information was used to corroborate the verbal data, to deepen the analysis of the chosen phenomenon, and to enrich the understanding of the participant's views about the visual arts. In research that is exploring new aspects of a discipline, it is important to try to analyze as much of what a respondent communicates as possible.

McMillan and Schumacher (1989) referred to three forms of ethnographic interviews:

- 1) the informal conversational interview, where the questions emerge within the immediate context of the situation and are asked in the natural course of

events. In this type of interview, there are no predetermined questions or phrasing and the researcher tends to follow rather than lead the conversation;

2) the interview guide approach is somewhat context driven in that the sequence and wording of the questions are decided upon by the researcher during the interview. The interviewer knows what topics are to be discussed prior to the conversation but attempts to incorporate them as normal or natural content within the interview;

3) in the standardized open-ended interview, the interviewer's influence is reduced by using the same questions, in the same order for all participants; however, such standardization may reduce the richness and narrow the range of the responses.

When the data are collected through an interview process, the interview questions influence the information produced. As more questions are asked of the respondent more of the researcher's influence is mixed into the content of the data and these questions will tend to affect the direction and pattern of the responses.

The issue of open-ended versus closed questions also affects the quality and content of the respondent's information. Closed questions will only collect the information related to the questions and would tend to reflect more of the researcher's aesthetic assumptions and

thus would be a less accurate depiction of the respondent's way of looking at and dealing with artworks. When the researcher intends to collect data which, in turn, is to be used to construct a theory/concept, then open-ended questioning is a preferable method.

The number of questions asked of the respondent is also an issue. As fewer and fewer questions are used, the respondent's descriptions become more and more her own -- the pattern of the response and the content and the direction of the recounting become a more accurate reflection of the respondent's experiences and assumptions, values and framework for making meaning of the experiences. This was seen to be a more useful guideline for my purposes.

How much time will the interviews require? Within the interview process, time has to be allowed to wait for the respondent to remember. The researcher has to be comfortable and supportive during long silences, to resist the desire to verbally bridge the gap. The time needed for each interview was projected to be approximately one hour. If an interview is intended to be between forty-five and sixty minutes, then approximately four hours should be planned for follow-up note making, transcription of the interview, and filing of response forms. In fact, each interview took about two hours.

## Data Collection Strategies

The first meeting, an orientation session, addressed the purposes of the study and the logistics. It was important to establish a good and trusting relationship with the participant at this time. I used the following outline as the basic agenda for this meeting: Begin with a statement of my research purposes and my area of interest. Assure the participant that her identity is protected. Next, review the topic(s) of discussion, the importance of the participant's information to the researcher and how the information helps in the research. Ask if I can answer any questions or concerns. If the potential participant is willing, have her sign the "Informed Consent Form" (see Appendix C). Make arrangements to establish the sequence of interviews once permission to proceed with the study has been granted by the university.

A fundamental goal for the collection of data in this research project was to acquire rich and detailed descriptions of experiences that have lead to the transformation of the participant's opinions and attitudes. The following overview outlines my data collection strategy. It was revised as necessary in order to reach the fundamental goal. Each interview was tape recorded.

The researcher prepared field notes for each interview. The field notes were of two types (McMillan & Schumacher,

1989).- Descriptive notes have low inference and include a portrait of the subject, description of the physical setting, an account of the events in the interview, and accounts of the researcher's and the participant's behaviours during the interview. The other type of notes, reflective, have high inference and include an analysis of the data, analysis of the methods employed in the data collection, any dilemmas and conflicts, an account of the researcher's frame of mind, and any necessary points of clarification.

The participant provided data as follows: tape recorded interviews and a written account of a change experience.

I conducted two interviews as follows:

#### Interview #1

The individual was somewhat familiar with the purpose of the research as a result of the orientation meeting when she provided her informed consent to participate in the study. A brief review of the goals of the interviews was provided.

The first interview was directed by the memories and stories of the storyteller as much as possible. The researcher participated in the interview as naturally as possible, seeking a comfortable conversational atmosphere.

Open-ended questions and encouragements were used to

initiate the telling of the stories. As the interview progressed, the researcher was prepared for pauses in the telling of the stories and was as supportive as possible. Some questions encouraging the subject to delve deeper into previous experiences and the ideas and assumptions that underlie her interpretations of those experiences were interspersed throughout this first interview. The second interview provided opportunities to return to particular experiences in order to probe for underlying assumptions, to clarify aspects of the stories, and to expand areas of interest.

That the interview stretched out to two hours seemed to indicate that the degree of trust and comfort established during this first interview was satisfactory. Both the researcher and research participant left the first interview feeling good about the conversation and looking forward to meeting for the next interview.

At the end of the interview the researcher asked the participant to write an account of one of the "change experiences" that had been discussed in the interview.

### Interview #2

Once again the atmosphere was as natural and comfortable as could be achieved. The subject's stories were the focus. The researcher asked about the individual's general situation (How are you?) and about her feelings



regarding the first interview, following an informal conversational interview strategy (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989).

The researcher participated more actively in this interview as follows:

1) By asking for clarification of information provided in the first interview - probing for some of the reasons behind the feelings, thoughts and actions described by the participant, and asking her to expand upon aspects of the stories that were of particular interest;

2) By asking for new information - other experiences that were related to the transformation of the subject's ideas and opinions, that may have come to mind since the last interview.

The written account was discussed briefly during part of this interview.

At the conclusion of the second meeting, the researcher and the participant discussed the third interview and the researcher asked for a copy of the participant's resume.

The interview ended on a positive note, with both participants feeling good about the progress made.

### Interview #3

The third interview did not occur. It had been planned to include a visit to an art gallery where the participant would have tape recorded her responses to artworks as she

viewed them. The gallery experience would have produced new psychomotor, cognitive, and affective data and thus, a different perspective on the question of what the participant valued in the visual arts. The researcher was to have observed the participant while she was in the gallery, made a map of her movements, and written field notes of the event. The visit was to have concluded with a de-briefing.

The interview was cancelled primarily because of scheduling problems. Given the time restrictions for the study and the richness of the data collected in the earlier interviews and the written response, I believe the study has not suffered significantly from this decision.

### Data Analysis

These respondent-centred interviews generated a significant volume of data. Every effort was made to consider all of the data collected and not to ignore that which seemed awkward or inappropriate.

The categories for sorting and organizing data are normally developed according to the theories being tested. In this research project, a framework for organizing all the data had not been discovered in the literature; the development of such a concept or theory is a long-range goal

for which the project will hopefully lay some preliminary groundwork.

The researcher has interpreted the data. The words, sentences and paragraphs plus assumptions, ideas, values and worldviews have all been translated and presented through my understanding of them. My meaning perspectives colour the participant's experiences. Transcripts of the data are provided in Appendices E, F, and G.

The rationale for the organization of the data emerged as the data were considered. These questions surfaced as the stories were reviewed: What were the most significant changes identified by the participant? What kinds of changes did the participant relate? Were any patterns of change revealed in the participant's stories?

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### The Case Study

#### The Research Partner

She was a collaborator in the project - a research partner. To provide anonymity, the individual is referred to as JW.

JW graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts, Honours: Art History and Drama in 1991. She had entered university at mid-life, after working as a broadcaster in radio and television and after raising two children. The children have both graduated from university - one is a medical doctor and the other is a criminal lawyer. JW's husband is an optometrist. See Appendix D for JW's resume.

#### The Interviews

The first interview was held at the Burlington Art Centre in the Fireside Lounge on Friday March 22, 1996 from 2:15 p.m. until approximately 4:15 p.m. The Fireside Lounge is a general purpose, rectangular, meeting room. As you enter the room, the wall to your immediate right is made of glass and faces onto an indoor conservatory filled with many species of plants and four brightly coloured, full-sized human figures made of fired clay (ceramic) --- the view is

spectacular. The glass wall meets a brick wall which incorporates the fireplace that gives the room its name. Directly opposite the door is the longest wall in the room. The wall is covered with cloth fabric and a number of watercolour landscape paintings are hung along the wall. The fourth wall is a floor-to-ceiling glass display case containing several pieces of ceramic pottery --- bowls, dinner sets, and so on.

JW and I were seated around the corner of the large table set in the middle of the room. JW had arrived a few minutes after 2:00 p.m. I expected her at 2:30 p.m. She had been earlier and later than expected for other meetings in the past. Was she anxious? I do not think so. She explained that her son had left his puppy for her to "babysit" and she was happy to have a break from that activity. She did not display any behaviour that suggested any unusual degree of nervousness. I believe that she was looking forward to the interview. She had said as much in the orientation meeting, and at the conclusion of the first interview she indicated that she had enjoyed the conversation. She did, on three occasions, say that she hoped that her story would be useful to me -- at the orientation meeting and at the beginning and end of the first interview.

The second interview occurred on Thursday March 28, 1996 from 2:30 p.m. until after 4:00 p.m. at the Burlington

Art Centre. JW arrived punctually at 2:30 p.m.

The interview was conducted in the researcher's office because the intended location for the meeting, the Fireside Lounge, had been taken over for a special event. The office is approximately eleven feet by thirteen feet. It is a comfortable room with lots of table and desk space. Two walls are dominated by large picture windows which have a view of Lakeshore Road and Lake Ontario. The rest of the wall space is used for bookshelves and a variety of art posters, postcards, and charts. Because of its size and location, it is also used by staff and volunteers, occasionally, for meetings and special work projects. We sat in one corner facing the walls with posters - one of which JW referred to during the subsequent conversation, Honoré Daumier's "A Clown."

Both interviews felt like conversations. However, I felt somewhat distracted by having to watch the tape recorder, wondering when it would run out of tape, and by having to maintain two roles, participant in the conversation and observer in the interview.

#### The Written Response

JW was asked to write an account of any experience which she would classify as a change experience. The length, format, style, and content were for her to decide. The written response provides an important alternate source

of data for the study. JW describes her experience with a careful, considered, and rich portrayal of the situation, the artwork, and her responses. A copy of the response is included in Appendix G.

### Interpretation of the Interviews

Why did JW change her mind about what was important and meaningful in the visual arts? Did she change her mind?

Her earliest response to the question was that she had not really changed her mind, at least not abruptly, through a sudden insight. She described herself as having "just grown," but then acknowledged that growth as changing in as much as her existing knowledge and beliefs were enriched and, perhaps, confirmed. This suggests two sorts of possible changes for JW. A progressive construction of knowledge where new knowledge is built upon previously learned knowledge and a more radical change involving the de-construction of existing knowledge followed by the reconstruction of new knowledge based on the changes that the individual has undergone.

### University Education

The most significant experience that resulted in changes for JW was her university education as a whole. It

was the experience that she discussed first and examples of her courses and the knowledge she gained were recounted throughout both interviews.

The influence of the university experience was enhanced by JW's readiness to learn when she returned to the educational system. She intended to absorb information and to seek answers to her questions about art. She identified her age, mid-life, as an important factor for her readiness. She said that her primary motivation was to learn, not to position herself for a job after graduating.

As we talked, and later when I reviewed our conversations, I wondered why her university education was so effective: Why was that educational experience so meaningful for her? There were a number of factors. She was at a stage of her life when she was able to make choices about what she would like to do versus what she had to do. Her family and life were stable and secure. She had the opportunity to do something that was for herself. It was the right thing at the right time.

The university experience gained greater influence through the cumulative effect of the courses and related experiences. Although JW only cited a few particular introductory level courses, history of music, history of art, and a studio program, it seems reasonable to assume that her other courses, lectures, seminars, etc. would have contributed to the power of the whole. They were not



mentioned as obstacles or negative elements.

She has an interdisciplinary framework for making meaning of art. Her hands-on studio knowledge enhances her experiences of others' drawings and paintings. She considers formal elements such as colour, rhythm, composition, line, shapes and space when she experiences theatre, music, and visual art.

The university courses provided factual information, analytical skills, interdisciplinary experiences, and a supportive atmosphere. All of these elements contributed to the change that JW described as a gradual awakening.

### Changes

I had been expecting to hear of a discrete experience, a book or seminar perhaps, to which she would have attributed a significant new insight or understanding: Either an experience where a number of ideas were synthesized and a new understanding came into being or, where a revolution occurred in her understanding.

JW wondered whether "sometimes life just directs you on its own." During our interviews she seemed to see a path, from her childhood to her life today, that had been shaped by unspecified "things." She did not describe any fundamental transformation of her mind or character in our interviews. She described her changes as growth,

enrichment, evolution, and awakening.

### Childhood

Her childhood experiences, receiving Sunday School cards with paintings of Jesus, seeing the Group of Seven silk-screens, especially "Northern River," in the hall at elementary school, and the Indian painting on the classroom wall, are specific experiences that have significance.

JW remembered special situations such as painting during recess with a group of other grade school students, painting at home with her mother and brothers, and her high school art teacher encouraging her to go to the Ontario College of Art.

She described these events as enjoyable and as helping to direct her toward more and more experiences with the visual arts. Like a snowball rolling down a hill, her interest in the visual arts gained momentum as her experiences increased.

### Avocational Studio Courses

These experiences were not clearly differentiated in the interviews. These appear to have begun not long after her children were born. During these drawing and painting courses her work was complimented; but JW did not understand the instructors' criteria for judging her work. She did not know what she was doing to warrant the admiration of the art

teachers.

During another studio course JW listened to some artists' discussion about colour and shape and light and dark in the landscape. She went out later and found "it was just like seeing the world anew!"

She was having positive experiences -- encouragement from her instructors and gaining some insights into new ways of seeing the world. She was also becoming aware of what she did not know -- the instructors' comments about her work were confusing.

#### University Courses

JW described the history of music course as very influential and indicated that she experienced a "great aha" insight during the program. That was her realization that there are common considerations in "all the arts" -- music, theatre, dance, visual arts, and literature. She listed "rhythm, texture, dark and light, variety, layering of ideas, layering of actual work that you're using, [and] the use of space" as common concerns. This experience involved a reorganization of her previous knowledge and, because she discovered the connections among the ideas herself, it was quite poignant.

JW identified the introductory history of art course as being a kind of awakening point for her understanding of "why artists will paint using the surfaces of things in a

two-dimensional way." In this instance, the change was brought about by a professor's lecture. JW said, "I didn't think it up myself, I didn't read it in the book and wake up, but when someone tells you that, points it out and you've got the textbook to look and reaffirm it, it all makes sense." This was new knowledge for JW, acquired from another person, not a reorganization of things that she knew. Her recollection of the experience lacked the excitement of her history of music anecdote.

### Aesthetic Experiences

Throughout the two interviews, JW mentioned a number of experiences with artworks. The visual art experiences included emerging artists and acknowledged masters. A brief overview of some of these experiences follows: "The Merode Altarpiece" attributed to Robert Campin, at the Cloisters in New York; "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci; a series of architectural drawings by Margaret Priest at the Art Gallery of Hamilton; "Guernica" by Picasso; a piece of the Berlin Wall by Sarah Churchill at Roosevelt's home on the Hudson River.

These experiences were powerful and meaningful for JW. She remembered her feelings and thoughts and details of the artworks very clearly. But they did not involve radical changes for JW. They were experiences which seemed to affirm her previous experiences and education. They

reinforced her existing opinions and values. Perhaps the power of her response was enhanced by the depth and breadth of her knowledge.

JW wrote a description of her visit to the Cloisters in response to my request for information about a change experience. A copy of her description is included in Appendix G. There is a dramatic tone to the presentation, from the author's playacting preceding her magical experience with the artwork, to the language and structure of the story. It feels as if it were crafted with care but finished in haste.

What change of mind does this story describe? Her experience echoes Beardsley's (1991) criteria for an aesthetic experience - object focus, active discovery, release from concerns of the past and future, a sense of personal integration and self-expansion, and detached affect. I was expecting a radical change of opinion; this is a change of consciousness, an altered perception of the world.

What were the factors that contributed to the power of JW's experience? She cited the contrast between her solitary walk within the Cloisters and the "brutality of Harlem's streets" and the "joy of discovery" as two contributing causes. She used dramatic exercises, "physical posture and carriage," to establish an altered perception of the whole situation, to set the stage. She was alone, not

attending to social interactions. Her art history knowledge - she recognized the painting and classified it within its time, style, and geographic region was a significant influence. She suggested that the most significant factor was the "ability of one creative human being to speak directly and personally to another human being across the centuries."

Certainly the artist spoke to her through the painting but, just as importantly, JW listened and was capable of finding meaning in the experience.

### Overview

All of these events have had their individual effects on the development of JW's opinions and ideas about visual art. There has also been a cumulative effect. The responses of JW today are shaped by all of her memories of previous experiences -- the positive early childhood experiences, her school experiences, the avocational studio courses, the university education, and the aesthetic experiences. Her experiences with artworks today are more complex and richer because of the knowledge and skills that she has acquired throughout her life.

### Patterns

JW's descriptions of her important aesthetic experiences included the title, the artist, the medium, the

school or style, and the date. This habit reflected her education.

Her choices reflected her personal values. Many of the paintings that she discussed deal with spirituality, Christianity, war and peace. These are issues that are important to her whole life. They connect to other important domains of her reality.

Works of art that deal with issues which are important to JW's life have the potential to provoke more powerful responses for her. She identified several moving experiences with paintings such as Campin's "Merode Altarpiece," da Vinci's "The Last Supper," Picasso's "Guernica." These paintings are important within an art historical context and within JW's personal concerns of spirituality and human conflict. I interpret these experiences as affirmations of beliefs and knowledge that JW has integrated within herself. They reinforce values and opinions that she holds to be true.

JW believes that the following factors affect individuals' responses to art: sensitivity, training, experience.

She believes that sensitivity is a natural facility for all individuals; however, a person may be very sensitive, a "genius," or very unsensitive. An individual's sensitivity can be developed through experience and training, especially if it is begun at an early age. It is implied that your

sensitivity is limited by "the way you're born" and by the training to which you are exposed.

If you are more sensitive, you are more receptive to the effects of artworks.

Training is the process of sensitizing through learning.

More experiences provide a larger range of memories which can be used to interpret current experiences.

#### Summary of Chapter

A thicker description could have been developed from the interviews and thus provided richer interpretations. I hope to develop such descriptions with practice in future studies.

JW changed her mind about the visual arts. An informal analysis of the data indicated that she demonstrated characteristics of the higher levels of Housen's (1983) aesthetic development model. She learned from her experiences with art and from her education.

She has identified specific experiences as change experiences: the poignant insight regarding the characteristics shared by different art disciplines; the art history lectures which revealed the connections between art practice and other aspects of history such as train travel.



Her studio experiences provided another type of knowledge with which to understand the artworks of other artists -- she could identify with the creative act while she was viewing artworks.

Her university education resulted in the creation of new knowledge and in the synthesis of existing knowledge for JW.

She developed analytical skills at university. She learned how to take an artwork apart, to think about it, and to put it back together. She learned how to learn.

Going to university at middle age was a great benefit to her. She was mature. There was less pressure and JW only took the courses that interested her. There were questions about the arts that she wanted to explore, issues she had been puzzling over, and the university experience offered a stimulating and supportive environment for the quest for answers.

The experiences from high school, elementary school, and Sunday School set the stage for later experiences. The avocational studio courses combined encouragement, insights, and unresolved questions to create a student who was motivated to learn.

JW's changes of mind have happened gradually without dramatic and fundamental transformations.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Discussion

JW felt that her hands-on studio knowledge enhanced her appreciation of artworks -- she can empathize with the creative process.

The art history knowledge that she has acquired extends her understanding of artworks. Although she felt this knowledge tends to become a checklist which she has used to identify, classify, and then ignore works, her descriptions of powerful aesthetic responses suggested that the art history information is an essential ingredient for her experiences.

The aesthetic experiences which JW described appear to fit the model of aesthetic experience proposed in chapter one; however, her most moving experiences seemed to involve most of the characteristics of the aesthetic experience proposed by Beardsley (1991) and Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990).

That individuals' aesthetic experiences will be enhanced as a result of improving perceptive, cognitive, and affective abilities, is generally accepted (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990; Dissanayake, 1992; Housen, 1983; Lachapelle, 1991, 1992; and Parsons, 1987). JW's stories supported this position. She cited her university education

and specific courses as the important influences on the development of her understanding and appreciation of the visual arts.

Her university education provoked changes in her opinions and interpretations of the visual arts. Did it change any of her assumptions about the visual arts? Her attitude towards the arts seems to have remained consistently positive, open, and inquisitive. She has acquired more information and skills -- art history facts and perception and analysis skills.

What aspects of the whole educational experience were more influential? Could more information be collected in an effort to determine the effectiveness of the components of the whole on the student's learning? Would an education program that was composed of only the most effective components actually be more effective?

This study suggests that the participant has slowly and steadily developed an ever more sophisticated, complex, and personal understanding of the arts. JW's stories indicated that she has not suffered a radical and profound transformation of her character or mind; but she has experienced a "gradual awakening." She has experienced some changes which resulted in a significant, new understanding of the arts and others, which involved a synthesis of existing meaning schema and perspectives.

The impetus for the changes appears to be self-

initiated sometimes, that is, to have come from within the participant. On other occasions, the impetus has been external: for example, a lecture that presented previously unknown information.

A wider range of the possible meanings of "change of mind" ought to be revealed through further discussion and research.

### Concluding Remarks

I continue to question how to interpret the data collected in this study. In particular I wonder how to choose a perspective from which to interpret the different processes of changing opinions -- philosophical? psychological? spiritual? What makes any one of these, or others, better than the rest? Given the heuristic nature of this case study, I have tried to understand the data from the perspective of the participant; however, I feel unsure in that role.

My limitations as a researcher were a concern during the collection and interpretation of the data. I felt that my interview skills needed to be critiqued by an experienced interviewer. With improved interview abilities, I expect that the quality and dependability of the data would improve. My interpretive and analytical skills ought to be evaluated and strengthened also. I felt unsure and clumsy

when developing the findings for this study. More experience and constructive criticism in this aspect of research methods would help to develop my confidence and abilities.

The dependability of the data, in this and future studies, could be enhanced as follows:

1. Use more sources for data - verbal interviews, written feedback, and observation of the participant during a gallery visit. Other data collection strategies can be employed; for example, the focused group interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989) might provoke a wider variety of memories in the participants. Therefore, the richness, diversity, and quality of the data could be increased.
2. Seek confirmation of the data by the participant. Discuss the researcher's interpretation of the data with the participant.

Three types of reactions to artworks continue to interest me -- negative, positive, and neutral. I am intrigued by the controversial, the magnificent, and the bland. I continue to investigate these sorts of aesthetic experiences.

I recognize that most individuals' opinions of art are not permanent, that they can learn to understand more about art. I question why some people seem to have learned more than others. Informal and formal opportunities to learn are

plentiful; in fact, it is difficult to avoid them. Why do some people change their minds about art?

This research is at a preliminary stage. It has only just begun to explore the implications of the research question.

### Implications For Future Study

The Burlington Art Centre is mid-sized, urban, public, non-profit community art centre situated in Southern Ontario. JW represents a segment of the population that believes in the value of such art galleries. Future studies should continue to investigate the experiences of individuals from this segment. In addition, data from less congruent segments of our public should be collected. A long-range goal to collect data from a range of individuals who represent the diversity of the public in our geographic region would provide a valuable source of information.

The study has not produced transferable results in the manner for which traditional quantitative studies are intended. The conclusions of this study are intended to stimulate further research, and I believe that the results of the study suggest new ideas regarding the original research question and encourage additional case studies.

These studies could help to develop and test a theory for why adults, in general, change their opinions about what they believe is important in the visual arts. Such a theory could be useful in the creation of aesthetic education opportunities for adults.

#### New Questions

Some new questions have emerged. If more individuals are interviewed, new directions for further research should become apparent. The key questions for my future research plans are as follows:

1. Are there significant connections between individuals' worldviews and their perspectives on the arts? How have changes of individuals' worldviews affected the meaningfulness and significance found in the arts, and vice versa?
2. If we accept that the aesthetic development theories of Housen (1983) and Parsons (1987) provide some useful information about the diversity of human response to art, can we generate any insights into the processes that individuals undergo when moving from one stage of development to another?
3. How does a self-initiated change of mind compare with one which is provoked by an external agent or event?

4. The definition and description of the term "change of mind" needs to be expanded. What kinds of changes of mind do different individuals describe?



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## Appendix A

Housen's Stages of Aesthetic Development**STAGE 1, THE ACCOUNTIVE STAGE**

The mode of viewing is by making random observations. The viewer notices the more concrete and obvious aspects of the content, subject matter, or color in the painting (for example, "It's a dog," or "It's brown"). The viewer is guided by personal and idiosyncratic associations. For example, if the person likes dogs, the painting of a dog will be judged as good. The viewer's preferences, beliefs, and past history form the basis for making evaluations.

**STAGE 2, THE CONSTRUCTIVE STAGE**

The viewer tries to build a framework for looking at works of art. With little exposure to art, the viewer matches the work to his (sic) own set of experiences and compares the painting to the world he (sic) sees and knows around him (sic). This interest in realism is paralleled by a practical outlook. A work of art must serve a functional purpose. The function may vary from the moral and didactic to the mundane and worldly. A painting may reflect the good and joyous life or it may be worth a huge amount of money. In either case, the work is measured by its "worth."

**STAGE 3, THE CLASSIFYING STAGE**

The viewer classifies the work of art. He (sic) decodes the artist's intentions and historical influences by analyzing the clues left by the artist on the canvas. Those clues, the formal elements of line, color, and composition, form the criteria by which he (sic) perceives, decodes, and judges a work of art. For the first time the viewer confronts the work of art directly and objectively. His (sic) personal history and affect are suppressed. His (sic) detective work results in the correct placement of a work of art in terms of a period, school, style, or particular place within the artist's oeuvre.

**STAGE 4, THE INTERPRETIVE STAGE**

The viewer responds to a work of art in an individualized and immediate way. Fully able to decode, analyze, and classify works of art, he (sic) now seeks less literal and objective goals than at the previous stage. He (sic) searches for a more meaningful message from the work of art and this time decodes symbols, not dots of color. He (sic) is aware of the role affect-laden memories play in his (sic) interpretation of those symbols and gives licence to his (sic) thoughts and feelings. He (sic) may say, for example, "The art work gives me feelings of being in New York with my father when I was young." Every fresh encounter with the work of art becomes a catalyst for the

viewer, occasioning a new consciousness of both self and work.

#### **STAGE 5, THE CREATIVE RECONSTRUCTIVE STAGE**

The viewer, suspending disbelief, treats the object as if it had a life of its own, with its own lawful properties and rules. While the viewer knows that the sailboat in the painting is not going to sail away, he (sic) may respond to the boat as if it could. The painting becomes semblant of reality. The viewer approaches the painting as a "friend," a phrase he (sic) often mentions. The work is looked at from many different perspectives, with each new encounter colored by past insights. Everything in the painting's history is considered: formal elements as well as museum acquisition dates warrant acknowledgment, since each detail reflects an intricate facet of the work as a whole. The encounter with the work demands that the viewer make equal use of all his (sic) faculties: perceptual, analytical, emotional. In the end, based on what he (sic) sees, what he (sic) knows, and what he (sic) feels, the viewer reconstructs the work of art for himself (sic), again and anew.

(Housen, 1987, p.45)

## Appendix B

Qualitative Research Evaluation Guidelines

To understand qualitative research it is necessary to read the entire report. This is how you are able to identify with the investigators and understand how they have come to their conclusions. The process by which this occurs is important, and to understand this process it is necessary to read from beginning to end. Similar to quantitative studies, there are certain questions that should be asked about the report to judge its quality.

Introduction

1. Is the focus, purpose, or topic of the study stated clearly?
2. Are there situations or problems that lead to the focus of the study? Is there a rationale for the study? Is it clear that the study is important?
3. Is there background research and theory to help refine the research questions?
4. Does the introduction contain an overview of the design?
5. Is the literature review pertinent to the focus of the research? Is the literature analyzed as well as described?



### Methodology

1. Are the particular site(s) described to identify its uniqueness or typicality?
2. How was initial entry into the field explained to others?
3. How was the researcher's presence in the field explained to others? What was the role of the researcher?
4. Who was observed? How long were they observed? How much time was spent collecting data?
5. Does the researcher report any limitations to access of pertinent data?
6. Are the data representative of naturally occurring behaviour?
7. Are the limits of the design acknowledged?

### Findings and Interpretations

1. Are the perspectives of the different participants clearly presented? Are participants' words or comments quoted?
2. Is contextual information for participants' statements provided?
3. Are multiple perspectives presented?
4. Are the results well documented? Are assertions and interpretations illustrated by results?
5. Is it clear what the researcher believes the data indicated? Are personal beliefs kept separate from the

data? -

6. Are the interpretations reasonable? Were researcher preconceptions and biases acknowledged?

### Conclusions

1. Are the conclusions logically consistent with the findings?
2. Are limitations of the research design and focus indicated?
3. Are the implications of the findings indicated?

(McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, pp.67-68)

## Appendix C

Participant Consent Form**BROCK UNIVERSITY****DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Informed Consent Form**

**Title of Study:** "Why Do Adults Change Their Minds About What Is Meaningful and Important In the Visual Arts? A Case Study"

**Researchers:** Professor Patricia Cranton and Researcher George Earl Wale

**Name of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve three interviews. During these interviews I will describe the development of my ideas and opinions regarding the visual arts with particular attention to experiences that may have transformed or caused the transformation of my ideas and opinions. In addition to the interviews I will write an account of a previous transformative experience and will be observed while visiting an exhibition at a public art gallery.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this project that I

consider invasive.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data.

---

Participant Signature

Date

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you can contact George Wale at the Burlington Art Centre, (905) 632-7796 or Professor Patricia Cranton at Brock University, (905) 688-5550.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available during the month of May 1996 at the Burlington Art Centre. A written explanation will be provided for you upon request.

Thank you for your help! Please take one copy of this form with you for future reference.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

---

Researcher Signature

Date

## Appendix D

JW's Resumé

April 30, 1996

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**EDUCATION**

McMASTER UNIVERSITY: Bachelor of Arts, Honours: Art History and  
 Drama, 1991  
 Summa Cum Laude

**ACADEMIC AWARDS:**

Deans' Honour List: Years One through Four inclusive  
 University Scholarship for Outstanding Achievement: Year Three  
 E.D. Marples Award in Art History: Year Two  
 University Scholarship for Academic Achievement: Year One

**AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST AND INDEPENDENT STUDY**

1. Public Art Policy in Hamilton: How Controversial Issues in Public Art in the United States and Canada Influenced the Development of Public Art Policy in Hamilton.
2. The Burlington Cultural Centre: Facing the Conflict between Community Responsibility and Exhibition Standards. This series of three essays began with a consideration of Shikata Ga Nai, an exhibition held in the Main Gallery of BAC in 1988. Bryce Kanbara curator.
3. Pablo Picasso: Visual Artist, Writer and Designer for Theatre.
4. "Happenings": Their Evolution and Influence on Late 20th Century Art.

5. The Image of the Automobile in Canadian and American Art since 1960:  
 This investigation began with a consideration of Auto-Portraits, an exhibition held in the Main Gallery at the Burlington Cultural Centre 1987. Alan C. Elder curator.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

Teaching Assistant to Dr. H. B. J. Maginnis at McMaster University 1991.  
 Course: Art History 1A06

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- teaching and evaluation of 80 first-year students
- attend two weekly formal lectures given for students by professor
- deliver one-hour lecture and slide presentation to four separate groups of 20 students once a week
- mark fall and spring essays and Christmas exams for students assigned to me
- additional duties included holding regular office hours for students to discuss their academic problems in the course.

## **STUDIO ART COURSES    Various and Ongoing**

McMaster University (credit course in Drawing)  
 Dundas Valley School of Art (various)  
 Sheridan College  
 Burlington Cultural/Art Centre  
 Independent classes with teachers Walter Hickling, Gery Puley, and Vera Uss  
 Workshops in Monoprinting and Woodcut  
 Life Drawing Studio

## **ART-RELATED EXPERIENCE**

### **1    BROADCASTING**

Researcher, writer and on air interview host for At the Centre, a Cablenet television programme produced once or twice a month for the Burlington Cultural/Art Centre. Guests were artists and curators. Subjects of exhibitions considered were sculpture, ceramics, paintings, photography, architecture and performance



"Jurying: The art of show selection". The Burlington Spectator. (November 26, 1993)

"Watercolour sails away with prize". The Burlington Spectator. (June 28, 1995)

"A table for two". The Burlington Spectator. (December 24, 1986) First prize winner in short story contest

Various articles for Burlington Gazette. (1980)

Various articles for McMaster University Silhouette concerning theatrical performances and art exhibitions on and off campus including the AGO. (1985, 1986)

#### 4 VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Publicity Chair, Burlington Fine Arts Association 1994 to 1996

Burlington Art Centre Advisory Committee  
Art Advisory and Publicity 1995  
Art Advisory 1990 and 1991

Member Burlington Cultural Centre art history student curatorial project. July/August 1990

Writer and Commentator: Burlington Mental Health Association Art Auction. 1985, 1986

Designer and Co Ordinator for Burlington Fine Arts Association mural on hoarding around construction site at Burlington City Hall. 1985

Newsletter Editor, Burlington Fine Arts Association. 1981 to 1983

Various positions receiving and hanging works of art for Kaleidoscope, BFAA Juried Exhibitions and Art Auction.



**EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO 1979**

Ryerson Institute of Technology: 1957 to 1959  
Radio and Television Arts 1958, 1959

Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute: 1953 to 1957  
Ontario High School Graduation

CFRA Radio Simcoe: Copywriter and announcer. 1960  
CHML Radio Hamilton: Copywriter and announcer. 1961 to 1963  
CHCH TV: Freelance announcer. 1961 to 1963  
CING Radio Burlington: On air host and interviewer for "Entertainment and the Arts". A daily 10-minute broadcast dealing with theatre performance and art exhibitions from Toronto to Stratford and Niagara-on-the-Lake. 3 years in the 1970s

**ART-RELATED TRAVEL**

1985 Italy with Sheridan College lead by Betty Dawson  
1989 Italy with McMaster University lead by Dr. Warren Tressider  
1986, 1994, 1995, personal trips to France  
Various trips to Washington and New York City to view art

**PERSONAL**

Married to: \*\*\*\*\*  
2 children: \*\*\*\*\*

## Appendix E

First Interview

R: It's just to try to find out what individuals, why do they change their minds. It may be very simple, it may be complex, we just don't know, and I won't know until I talk to people. So I guess I just want to know, let you tell me in your words, and in your way, about why you changed your mind, if you have, about what's important to you in the visual arts.

JW: I wonder whether I really have changed my mind or whether, in fact, I've just grown and that, I suppose, is changing your mind, it's an enrichment. I haven't sort of said, "Ah, ha, this is it," but I think when I started looking at works of art I was probably more confused about why there was such a variety of things that were considered good. That puzzled me. I couldn't figure out, for example, why some of Picasso's works were considered excellent and say some of Michaelangelo's works were considered excellent; I couldn't balance that in my own mind.

R: Because they're so different?

JW: Yeah, and why, when I was taking drawing classes myself someone would come along, a teacher would come along and say "That's very good, I didn't know what I had done; I didn't understand why, say a line, a particular line was good, or a colour relationship was good, or a balance of light and

dark, I didn't know that; however, now having studied for so long and talked to so many artists myself and studied more drawing and painting, now I understand what it is that makes artwork work. So it's not that I've changed my mind about what I think, I've sort of grown and evolved.

R: So you, are you sort of saying that there's a kind of gradual evolution ...

JW: awakening ...

R: or awakening ...

JW: Yeah, it was, it was, it wasn't a great "Ah ha". I didn't sort of say: "That's what it all means," no and it's taken a very long time for me to come to terms with it; I may be a slow learner, I don't know, or maybe I'm more sensitive to a whole lot of different things; maybe I'm more critical of what I do myself ...

R: Maybe.

JW: Maybe I have more of other people's work than I should or than other people do, I don't know, but I sort of had to stand back for a long time to come to terms with it.

R: When you talk about learning and the exposure that you've had to different ideas and people, can you maybe give me a sense of what some of those things or those events and experiences were ... I know you went back to university, but can you give me a bigger picture of ...

JW: Even before that?

R: Well, of the ... maybe start off with a summary of the whole learning, or even just ...

JW: Well, what I did was I always drew and painted, you know, everybody who's in the arts always says the same thing: "Well, I did it when I was a kid and I'm still doing it." We had a group of students when I was in Grade Five and Six and we all got together and we, that's what we did at recess, we drew and we painted and we all brought our pencil crayons and I had a little box of watercolours even then and so you have that background. I never really did a lot with it, I did some oil painting and my mother painted, my brothers all painted, but I first started taking classes ... (indistinguishable) ... a barn, and that's when I really started thinking about what I was doing and that's when our teacher, I was drawing, sort of a scribble drawing and I was very free and very loose and this person said to me, "I've never seen anybody who could draw like that, so consistently, and have it turn out so well," and I looked at it and I thought to myself, "I don't know what she means, I don't understand what it is that I've done that she's admiring." And another teacher I had, I was doing a life drawing course and after a couple of classes, I went up and I said, "Please, you're not saying anything to me about what I'm doing" and this person said to me, "It's because you're doing all right, and I don't want to spoil anything that you're doing." And I didn't understand that, either, and I

should have questioned that person and said, "What do you mean?", but maybe I wasn't even ready at that point to understand ...

R: To press for it, or even to ...

JW: From that point of view, and when I looked at other people's work, I just didn't know what was good and what wasn't good, what was effective, what was compelling about some things and not about other things, so I didn't have any basis for making any judgments. I liked it and I looked at things, but I didn't have any basis for judgments. ... that's why I went back to university, it was all terribly confusing to me, it's all, I want to know what it all means, I want to know why Medieval art is wonderful, I want to know why Primitive art is wonderful, I want to know what the Renaissance is all about, you know, so I just decided to bite the bullet and really go back and delve into it. And now I look back, and now when I look at works of art and I still do a lot of drawing and painting, not as much as a full-fledged artist, but do it for myself, so now I'm starting to understand; it's taken a long time. [laughing] You know, it wasn't a quick process for me.

R: To me, now, it sounds like you took some courses and classes that were hands-on, like studio, and you took, you were talking about Medieval and Renaissance and so on, you would have also taken Art History courses, and would you say

that both kinds of learning experiences contributed to the evolution, the awakening of your critical abilities?

JW: Yes. I think if you're going to do any kind of writing or thinking about art, I really think people need both and it's a shame to me, it seems to me that a lot of Art History courses don't insist that students take the drawing and painting so they have the hands-on practice, whether you get to be any good, or whether you have any creative talents as far as putting it down on paper is beside the point; it's learning how it's done and it's knowing how it feels to make a mark on paper, to make a sweeping line or a thick line or a thin line or a line with variety or putting the paint wet-on-wet and layering, or, you know, all those kinds of things, it's one thing to talk about it academically, but it's so different when you do it. And it's so different when you approach a work of art when you look at a painting and you get a sort of social context, an iconography, you get all that historical perspective, you get all the biography floating around in your head, but if you've actually done the work yourself, you look very carefully at the line and the texture and the colour, you feel it, you can tell how the artist's hand made the mark, how it went on the paper or canvas, so I think that both things are really important. I don't, when I was at university and I started off, my intention was to take some studio courses and I took one and I really enjoyed it, and I did very well, and then

they cut-off, they wouldn't let Art History students take any more studio courses, which was such a shame. [Laughing]

R: Was that some sort of curriculum ...

JW: Yeah, they had too many students applying for the studio courses and they felt that they had to make a decision and they decided that anybody who was majoring in Art History couldn't take any more of the studio courses, you had to be a major in studio work to do it and then the studio students were allowed to take Art History courses, in fact, they had to, but not very many. But the overlap was there for them, but the overlap wasn't there for the Art History students anymore. I thought that was a shame.

R: That's a good point. I do too.

JW: I thought it was a shame. I did a double major and I did Drama and in the Drama courses we took both the academic study of the literature of the theatre, but we also had to perform, we had to do improv, we had to do Shakespeare and we had to produce, we had to direct, we had to do makeup, we had to do everything, so we came out with a real feel for theatre and I think a lot of Art History people come out without that hands-on knowledge.

R: I didn't know that you studied Drama as well. Do you think that that would, has any of that experience that learning, influenced your thinking about the visual arts?

JW: Yeah.

R: Can you tell me a bit about that?

JW: Definitely. That's another thing that I think is really interesting and it's, I really feel that all the arts are the same. Because I did a music course, too, I did one year of the history of music, which is an absolutely marvellous course and I sell it every chance I get, but there are things in music, there are things in theatre, there are things in dance, there are things in the visual arts, that are the same - rhythm, texture, dark and light, variety, layering of ideas, layering of the actual work that you're using, the use of space - all those kinds of things can be found in all the arts. For instance, if you take a piece by Beethoven, it gets very loud, and all the instruments are involved, and then all of a sudden, it's silent and you hear maybe a flute or a piano picking up the theme and carrying on. That kind of incredible change is very dramatic; it's like something that's very very dark in a painting against something that's very light, it's very compelling for the viewer or the listener. It attracts your attention, and it holds your attention, so that if you have a strong contrast of dark and light in a painting, that's the focal point, but you'll also have the richness of detail in Beethoven's orchestration, you find that in painting; you find that in dance - when dancers come on the stage, they come on in a certain pattern, they come on singly or they come on in groups, the lighting changes, all those things are the same in all the arts, and I didn't realize that



until I took the music course. That was the first course I took at university, and that in fact, was a great "ah ha." That, you know, all of a sudden I realized that those things were the same ... in literature too. You can't write paragraph after paragraph after paragraph with all your sentences the same length, with all your paragraphs the same length, with the same structure in the sentences, with the same structure in the paragraphs, it doesn't work. You've got to plan it, you've got to think about it, it's exactly the same thing. So a very short sentence after a very long sentence has a very dramatic effect.

R: Yes, more power.

JW: Yeah. So, all the arts just tie together. I talked to someone one time and she said, "You're crazy, that's not true at all, they're all very different." And they are, all very different, but still, the things that make paintings and drawings work, I think make theatre work, make music work.

R: Yeah. Yeah, it makes sense to me. You mean, you're talking about, kind of formalistic issues, but you're also talking about content, or the ideas, the meanings that can be conveyed by the media.

JW: Sure. Because, ah, if you watch, for example, Swan Lake, which is very dark and very mysterious and terribly romantic and Beethoven's (sic) a terribly romantic musician and the power of the music and the swarming of the swans on

the stage. You know how the same kind of quality that you find in, I don't know, a Turner painting, or something that has that sort of vortex and swirly, you get those kind of things that imply the power of nature, the power that we don't have, that you know, there's something greater than us. So it's kind of a thing, I would never ... I never ... I would have maybe felt it, I would have sort of had a consciousness that there was something there, but until you sort of start to take things apart, when you're listening to music, or when you're watching ballet, you know, I had to write reviews for a couple of courses that I took and you had to take it apart, you had to think about it and you had to put it back together again, and I was fortunate enough to go back in middle life, it didn't matter what I took, I took those things that I loved and if I couldn't take it, I'd wait for the next year and take it when it was available again, so I was extremely fortunate that I didn't have to think about getting a job when I got out.

R: Yeah, right, I understand what you're saying, yeah.

JW: So I indulged myself incredibly.

R: You may have had different motivations, too. I mean, you talked I think a bit about being ready for certain things, like ...

JW: Yeah, you see that's another gift. I puzzled for a long time about all this stuff, where I think young people go into university and haven't had time to puzzle over

things. And I also, going back in my life, I also felt, um, and different who would say, talk about Homer, for example, and know exactly what it was all about, you know, things like that, were just - I wouldn't know, and I felt, um, insecure about it and so it was very good for me to be able to go, and say I'm going to find this out; I'm going to see where it fits in, I'm going to see how this, why this kind of thing keeps coming up again and again over the centuries, why it appears in art and literature, you know. So, I was able to do that and I was able to know what I didn't know, and able to appreciate ...

R: Yeah, that's a good point ...

JW: Yeah, I was able to say, I can look at paintings and I don't understand them and I don't know what it's all about, whereas I think a lot of young people can go into studying things and not know what they don't know? So, from that perspective going back in middle age was really an advantage to me, now you see, you don't get a chance to use it to the degree that you do if you're, if you're young, you can go out and find a job and do everything, whereas at my point, I can only do what's possible, you know.

R: Well, I think, I mean, forgive me for saying so, but I think that you've been pretty effective in using the experiences and the things that you've learned; for instance, you know, your involvement with cable TV and that program that you ran.

JW: Yeah, well, see that's why I did it. You go back, and you think to yourself, "Oh man, this is so-o-o great; I want to tell everybody, I want everybody to look at a painting and be able to see. I remember once being with a group of people, we were going through a museum in France and these were people who knew nothing about art, they were in the fields of science and medicine, they didn't know anything. And they, even today, people cannot understand why artists will paint using the surfaces of things in a two-dimensional way; they can't get their head around that when they know full well that we can paint these wonderful atmospheric and mechanical or mathematical perspectives and create that window, and people don't understand that, so I take great delight in talking to people about that and I have to say to myself, "Shh, . . . don't say any more ...". But that kind of thing, when you're going through school and you can understand what happens, why artists would change direction, you know, what would make people think in terms of wanting to use the two-dimensional surface when they can be so skillful using a three-dimensional window, kind of thing.

R: Do you remember, I think that's a really important point, like a key sort of difference between people; you know, that, like you say, that ability ...

JW: That awakening kind of point ...

R: Do you remember anything about when that might have happened for you, or when, anything about your experiences around that?

JW: Probably in the first-year course, which is the Jansen 1A6, or whatever it's called in each university, probably because that course is so sweeping and you just keep going and going and going and you pass through time and you see the social changes and the historical and the political changes in the world and you see the art being developed along at the same time, so in the sense you really get a good opportunity to see what happens . . . realized it was during that course where I sort of realized why artists would do that kind of thing. Now, mind you, somebody standing up there at the front of the class pointing it out to me, I didn't think it up myself, I didn't read in the book and wake up, but when someone tells you that, points it out and you've got the textbook to look and reaffirm it, it all makes sense. I think the one thing I didn't realize was that history and society and even technical changes in things like the fact that oil paints was put in a tube and an artist could carry it around with him whereas he hadn't been able to before, I think those kinds of things were lovely to know; they made a difference in the way I looked at or understood what was happening.

R: In a way, you know, this echoes for me your idea of making the understanding or appreciation and understanding

of artwork more real or more complete, um, there's the one thing to just have a kind of dispassionate academic understanding of something, but to know these sort of reality things like the sort of portability of painting media ...

JW: That's so neat ...

R: And often you go, oh well, yeah, of course, it would allow, it would give them a freedom ...

JW: And trains too; it never occurred to me that the development of the train came about at the same period of time as the development of impressionism when they got out into the country and they were moving about and they were no longer locked in their studios, and that - I mean - I don't know how much impact it had, but it was a factor, it was just another thing that changed things. So I think all those things make a difference and I didn't know that before. And I don't think a lot of people do. I think a lot of people think that paintings that you see ... around here are simply an expression of the artist's personality. That's all there is to it, that the artist has decided "I'm going to do this." But they don't realize that no matter who we are we are all affected by what's going on around us and, um, you can't help but be a child of your own time.

JW goes on to use Bateman as an example of an artist who has successfully connected his work to the

widespread general concern for the environment and nature.

JW: Art changes as society changes and what the artists do changes, how they approach the canvas, how they approach the subject matter, what they are thinking about, what they are feeling.

She likes to think that, now, she is able to gain some insight into these issues when she contemplates works of art.

JW: [T]he world is so rational, and so concrete, so aggressive and you, sometimes, you can't talk to other people about it they don't understand. They think you're very strange. I've been at dinner parties where people started talking about art and, ah, people still laugh at Picasso and think he's, you know, they say he's pulling the wool over his eyes and you know there you are on the defensive [laughs] and you try and defend poor Picasso ... in the face of six or seven people who have had three or four glasses of wine and it's impossible! [laughing] ... you sort of think there's something really weird about me, I don't belong in this house --- 'cause they just don't get it. But you can lead them to it gently, I guess, over a period of time.

R: Well, that's a good point. I mean, why is it that some, why do some people, let's say, get it, have, why do some people seem to connect with different art forms more than others?

JW: Why some people even connect with any art forms, and some people just have no interest or no concern at all. I don't know, I think a lot of it is the way you're born. I think, ...

R: Like, kind of a genetic disposition?

JW: I think a lot of it's training, a lot of it's sensitizing when you're a child and being in the right place. I know the first experiences I had with pictures, images, that moved me were in Sunday School and surprisingly enough I've heard so many rock singers, folk singers, jazz singers say "I learned to love music singing in the choir at church" or "Sunday School," or "playing in the Sunday School Band." I was in the choir when I was a young child and I remember going into Sunday School and walking up this wonderful little staircase that went round and round and round which intrigued me when I was about three or four years old, this lovely little sunlit room that was blue and white and the wonderful thing was at the end of the class the teacher gave us little cards with paintings on; they were paintings of Jesus standing at the door with children on his knee; they would have little Bible stories on the back and I would carry them home and I was so proud and I



would show my mother and I had a little stack of them at home in my bedroom and I loved the images of it. Now perhaps I was sensitive religiously too, and I liked the fact that there was this wonderful person who loved all the little children, that appealed to me enormously, but I had these pictures that I could hold in my hand and they were my own. Strangely enough when I went to Mac and I was studying Modern Art, I ran into the Nazarenes and Holman Hunt, German painters in the 1860s or so and they were the same pictures, were actually works of art in this text by Penguin, no, Pelican Books. They were History of Modern Art from 1740-1860 and then the next one was 1860- ... and there they were, in there. I couldn't believe my eyes. These same little pictures. So what I'm saying is, maybe because I was a little tiny child and I had these pictures of my very own and the ideas that were in the pictures pleased me and maybe that helped sensitized me to loving and looking at images, you know? Maybe if I hadn't had that chance I might not have been sensitized to looking at ... we had glass slides that we'd show and then we'd sing hymns and there were other wonderful pictures in there. And then in Kindergarten we used to have a wonderful big picture of an Indian, I have no idea what it was to this day; it wasn't Joseph Brant, I don't what it was, but it was on the back of this Kindergarten classroom and it was this huge big thing and I was fascinated by this Indian: who was he, what was it all

about? So I asked the Kindergarten teacher and she told me that it was the first people who lived in Canada and that was about all she said about it, and I thought, "God, isn't this great?"

R: In Burlington?

JW: No, this was in Toronto. So I should go back some day and see if it's still in the Kindergarten class, still there. And then one day I was walking down the hall and I was about Grade 2, 3, 4, something like that and all of a sudden, there were all these paintings on the wall, they were a Group of Seven silkscreen paintings that they issued about that time, I didn't know anything about them, but they were just there, and Northern River was between the Kindergarten class and the Auditorium and I used to stand there and look at it, because by that time we had a cottage up north and I thought "Ah, this is just like up north." That was another experience, I think, that if you're lucky as a child, I mean other children may have been luckier than I, other children may have had parents take them to art galleries or had a home filled with paintings of great value or something, I didn't, but I had those little things that pleased me. I think that makes a difference in people's lives, I think. You need that exposure when you're little. They say if you take a child into a book or a library or a bank when they're tiny, they never have that fear that, you know, that Stephen Leacock's talking about "when I go into a

bank I get rattled" -- if you had a bank account when you were a little kid, you wouldn't get rattled when you're an adult. I think that those little things when you're a child make a difference.

R: I know a lot of people, well, I exaggerate a little bit, but I know other people, besides you and me who've had the memory or memories of those serigraphs of the Group of Seven in public school.

JW: I wonder what ever happened to them all, I mean, maybe they're still hanging in the schools.

R: Maybe. But I think a lot of them just, you know, they were ...

JW: Unprotected. There wasn't any glass over them, if I remember correctly, they were just hanging there all of a sudden.

R: I remember reading a little bit about in some book somewhere, so ... they were everywhere and ...

JW: They made a really big effort, apparently, about that time, I sort of put it together, because I was reading a book, probably the same as you saw, anyhow someone, the Government, made a great effort to put them out. Well, it sure had an effect on me.

R: So in a way, you know, the experiences that you talk about, I can identify with some of them. They're experiences that lots of people would have had, but you know I think you've done something with them that, like, that not

everybody else has done, you know, in the sense that they helped to get you where you are today for sure, but you've gone some place, you've done some things that other people who've had similar sorts of childhood experiences, they haven't gone there. I mean I think that there are some, but, you've done some special things I think.

JW: But I think, it's ... keep pushing you, maybe, not pushing you, but taking you in that direction sometimes with people, like there's nothing else to do and you just keep getting slotted off in that direction. I applied for Nursing and obviously (laughing) the people knew something about taking in Nursing students and I don't remember ever hearing from any of the Nursing schools I applied to, but my friends all did, they all got in and I felt absolutely crushed that I didn't but in retrospect it was the best thing in the world because I would have made a terrible nursing candidate and I'm too sympathetic when people are in pain, so life pushed me out of that. If I had gone into nursing, I wouldn't have time to do the kinds of things that I've been doing, so I thought, "OK I'll go this route, I'll follow this direction." So, you know, sometimes life just directs you on its own; it just kept coming. When I worked for a while before I went back to university, I was working at a radio station and I was doing this live radio program called Entertainment and the Arts and I decided that all I would do was Canadian art and entertainment, back in 71, 72,

somewhere around there and not very many people were talking about Canadian things, and I mean there wasn't a great deal of nationalism buzzing around at that point; anyway, that's what I decided to do and I thought to myself at the time, "This is really neat, I really like this kind of stuff, I like going to all these plays, the Shaw Festival and in Toronto to all the alternate theatres and getting tickets to art exhibitions and invited to openings and everything." It was kind of great, like I was in there and then when that job came to end and the radio station changed its programming, it said "We're not making enough money doing what we're doing, folks, you're out the door, we're going to foreign broadcasting" and we were all chucked out. And I was geared up, I was filled with enthusiasm again for the arts which I had sort of put on the side while I was raising my children and that was when I decided to go back to university. Like the job coming to an end forced me back to university because I want to do something that was difficult and stimulating and I wanted to pursue, I wanted to know more than I knew when I came to broadcasting, I really felt inadequate in a lot of places and I thought I really needed to dig into this and see what it's all about, so my experiences then seeing all the plays, for instance, I remember seeing a production of Chekov's The Cherry Orchard at The Shaw Festival - a wonderful play, and it was a very strange production, it was on a raised stage in the centre

of the stage and they had these white curtains draped all over and they did it as kind of an ethereal, mystical thing and I couldn't understand it, I had no idea what it was all about and I had to go back to the radio station and review the darn play and I didn't know, and I knew at that point that if I had read the play, if I knew Chekov better, I ... I mean I had studied Chekov at Ryerson, but I didn't know this play and I didn't know very much about Chekov because I fooled around too much at Ryerson, had too much fun and so when I went to university that's one of the reasons I studied theatre because I loved it so much. I've since seen other productions of the Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* and they made so much sense to me and I loved them so much and I came out of one up at Stratford Festival about five or six years which was an incredible production, it was so humourous, and it was so down-to-earth and it was so rich and the characters were so full and I think if I'd experienced that one before I'd been back to university I might have been better prepared for the white-draped cloth production, but that was a very good production and it was very closely related to the kinds of things that there are in art, see in theatre, the costuming, oh the costuming is done within a colour range, with all golds and browns and deep reds and so it was a very rich production to start with, as opposed to this other thing, everything white and grey and spooky and the director had directed it so that

there were a lot of triangles, there were rectangles, there were circles, when they plan, when they block the show the director blocks it according to how he wants his characters to stand facing the audience in a group, facing the exits and they see the character coming in or they don't see, but he had done it so that there were all these wonderful geometrical shapes, for whatever reason, but it really worked; for instance, he had one scene in which almost all the cast were seated on a bench and lined up behind the bench and they carried on this conversation and they were all in this triangle shape, but it really worked and it was at the front of the stage so that everything they said about moving their national identity and about society changing so much from the old landed gentry to the serfs taking over and new business coming up, it was very effective and it came across. In a lot of plays that kind of discussion doesn't come across, so that was good. (Laughing) It doesn't tell you a lot about painting, but I honestly believe that these experiences, with all the arts, enrich each other and they're all similar experiences.

R: Is there any sort of art that you prefer now, above others, a kind of, an artist whose practice you really admire?

JW: One of the problems that I have is that I have eclectic taste, I think. I like a whole lot of different kinds of

things. I was in the Art Gallery of Hamilton, not too long ago, um, last week or two weeks ago... . There was a series of drawings by a woman named, ah, not Mildred Pearce, that's the movie. But I think her name was Pearse and I think her first initial is M [JW is referring to Margaret Priest]. They're drawings and you should see them because you would relate to them I'm sure. They are incredible [with emphasis] drawings! They are architectural spaces and they're just drawings that she has manipulated this space and ah, ah, she's done it maybe fifteen times but each one is a different [pause] illustration of the same space ... they are absolutely astonishingly well done. I mean you look at them and you think how beautiful they are just, the dark and light and the subtleties of the tonality and the architectural structure and how she has pulled together the horizontals and the verticals and the angles. Um, the content, I have no idea why she would do them. They're so abstract looking. There's no human form in them. There are no plants. There's nothing, just this incredible architectural space ... quite tight. And they are absolutely amazing!

On the other hand, there are this group of paintings by Hamilton artists, um, in the "Hamilton 150th Anniversary" and this great big gutsy thing and in this [unintelligible word] bright reddish pink that's meant to be a map from the air of, um, the Hamilton Bay area, Hamilton and the Bay and



the lake and the beach strip. It's gutsy and it's thick paint and it's got gold on it and it's --- vulgar and corny (we laugh together) and I liked them both! I looked at this and I thought "Man isn't that great!?" If that isn't Hamilton, you know Hamilton really has, ah, gutsy kind of power and it has a beauty. But it has this incredible aggressive kind of quality to it. And I looked at it and I thought "You got it!" You know? I don't know whether the painting will be around twenty years from now but, ah, and then I looked at the name and holy cow, it was one of the students that (sic) was in my class, a classmate of mine. So I was delighted, I thought, neat, you know? Here's a twenty-year-old kid, I suppose he's maybe twenty-five now, and his work is hanging as part of this collection illustrating what Hamilton is all about. So, I mean, I go from liking the really, really refined kinds of things right through to -- so it depends doesn't it? It depends on -- if the artist grabs you and if he's saying -- is he telling you what he wants to tell you forcefully enough? You know? You can't, you can't be timid about, and you can't be confused about, what you want, you want to say. You can't be hesitant, you can't be wishy-washy, you've got to say what you've got to say and say it the way you want to say it and cut out the extraneous material so it's not getting too confusing. And maybe both of those works did that ... I don't honestly know. I couldn't say to you "I like Modern

Art and I don't like academic art" because I look at some people's drawings --- I went up to the McMaster show and there are, it's a figure show, ah, and there are some astonishingly beautiful paintings by a woman artist. They're, ah, exaggerated perspectives, so if the model, they are nude, so if the model is lying down, the feet and the lower body are quite large and the head is quite small [I interject "so it's like dramatic foreshortening?"]. Yes, a dramatic foreshortening is right and ah, it's a bit odd if you look at it but it's so beautifully done. So refined and soooo, carefully modelled from one tone to the other, and the shapes and the forms and the expression on the face, and you know? They're wonderful. The space that the model is in. And then there were Lucien Freud drawings which are not that refined. They're bolder, stronger, and the line is important and the line describing the form --- so, mmmm, you can't say I like one thing better than the other. I don't know --- (louder, with emphasis) I wish I could, I wish I was more decisive, I wish I could say "Oh yes I do!" But I think maybe that's limiting. I know when I was at school there were a lot of people who would say things like "I don't like Modern Art. I --" [I express some surprise]. Like you run into it everywhere. And I've talked to a lot of people who say you know "Modern Art is, or abstract art, is just a style, a phase we are going through. And it's all gone and I don't like it, and I'm not going to waste my time

on it." --[Again, I am surprised]. I won't tell you who said it but [I laugh and she smiles then laughs], it was a quite well known artist in this area you know? And I thought "Wow, that really surprises me coming from you!" Um, so, I don't have those kinds of strong responses to one style or another.

R: Can you recall any art work that you didn't like?

JW: Yes sometimes, sometimes paintings are too painful to want to [I interject, Too painful?] ya, to look at very long. (mumbles, looking for words) ... The painting of ah Marat, in the bath? ["The Death of Marat"] I really find that hard to look at, I don't know why. I just ... it was on the course when I T.A.'d, and so I had to spend a lot of time with it, mark a lot of essays about it (sighs and laughs). And I remember saying to the students, "If I owned that painting I would have to turn it to the wall." I don't know why, maybe because it conjures up so much of the pain of the French Revolution, and the horror of that period and because I read that awful play "Marat Sade." --- Sometimes things are really painful. Um, you want to walk away. I'm, I'm trying to think if there is anything recently that's made me feel that way. (pauses) There are, because I remember, I remember the feeling but I can't remember what paintings and what had been done. (pauses) But sometimes um, sometimes things are just too horrifying to look at. I, I don't watch anything that's about the war in Germany because

when I did a film course I had to watch so much of it, because I lived through it, and I had friends who were in camps and stuff, I can't take it and so I would never have gone down to the [exhibition, at Ydessa Hendeles's gallery in Toronto,] of photographs that a young German soldier had done a day inside the ghetto. And he had taken all these photographs and saved them and someone found them a little while ago. I couldn't --- I could not have gone to see them, that exhibition. I couldn't go and see, um, some of Robert Mapplethorpe's work I'm sure. And last year there were some paintings, some photographs in the um, Perry Gallery (an exhibition space at the Burlington Art Centre) from our Latow Guild [of Photography] and there are a couple in there now that I just want to walk away from. I find them too disturbing. So that tells you more about me, though, than the art work 'cause I don't give them a chance.

At this point, I expanded upon my reason for asking her to talk about works and exhibitions that she did not like or avoided. I wanted to find the boundaries of her eclectic tastes because I believed that she did not like everything.

JW: There are a lot of things I wouldn't bother with. I'm trying to think now, um, what they would be but things I would think that I, you know, I won't bother going to see

that 'cause-I, I have a feeling that it's not going to  
(pauses) I'm (laughs) being snotty, be up to the level, that  
I want to waste my time, time.

R: Sure you have to make choices.

JW: You do, ya, ya. And sometimes I'll say "No I won't."  
I won't bother going to see that particular exhibition or I  
won't bother, whatever and it just doesn't interest me. Um,  
but, by and large I will watch, or I will go and see most  
everything and give it a chance. 'Cause sometimes you'll go  
and see one thing, in an exhibition that really isn't very  
good but you'll see one thing and you'll say "Man, that's a  
great little thing!" You know? It may not be earth  
shattering. It may not be in the ah, National Gallery in  
ten or fifteen years, but it's not bad! You know? Yes,  
something good in that one. And that's kind of exciting  
too, when you find um, somebody --- now whether it just  
happens, you know, is that, is it more good luck 'cause if  
you make enough marks on paper (we both laugh) one of them's  
gonna be not bad. So sometimes it's good luck with some  
people I guess but sometimes you just find a little gem... .

I steered the conversation back to the art that she had  
avoided and/or had found to be disturbing, trying to  
get more information regarding those works.

JW: But you know what? Those ones I said I would want to see are too realistic, are too close; whereas Picasso's "Guernica" is so abstracted ... that's interesting.

R: I was just going to say that the other ones that you mentioned were photographs. Which is connected to your ideas of kinds of representation imagery ... [I have found that] for some reason it seems that a lot of people find photographs of the body, in whatever, you know, um, sort of position or situation they're in, ... photographs are, provoke a stronger response than for instance sculpture, or paintings that might be quite real as well. They're not as real as a photograph of a real person ... for some reason a photograph of a person has more power to provoke a reaction than even a quite realistic painting of a person.

JW: I know exactly what you mean. I, I heard somebody discussing one time and they said, "It's very hard to tear up a photograph of a family member." You really, really have to be filled with anger and hatred. I guess you could do it to a divorced husband if you were angry enough, I mean I know people who are actually having them wiped out (we both laugh) of wedding photographs. But if someone said to you, "Oh, that's a nice picture of your children. Would you tear it in half and give me the half with you and, you know, one child and I'll give ..." It would be almost impossible to do that. It would be, it would be very difficult.

R: Mmmm, I'm wondering why?

JW: Something about photographs, you're absolutely right, that is, one step closer to reality, I think, than painting. ... Sometimes it is easier for me to watch, ahhh, something real being on a newsreel than it is to watch a play or a television program about, a reconstruction of, of a murder. It would be much easier for me to listen to the actual details which is kind of a reverse of that (pauses and considers her statement). I don't understand that. Why, for instance I can read the details or look at the details on TV of a murder trial; but a reconstruction of, of it and turned into a play would be too hard for me. Maybe because they heighten the emotional impact, maybe, in a, in the film version.

I add "It would be staged in such a way and lit in such a way ... you're right, to heighten the emotional impact."

JW: Anyway, well you're certainly right about photographs having this incredible impact. (voice rises) It's interesting too that, um, after the ah, fall of ah, communism in Russia, someone pointed out to me, I didn't come to this myself, that one of the first things that they did was knock down the statues of Lenin and um, whoever else. And, in China, for Tienamen Square, they build this enormous sculpture of a figure of freedom. How powerful

those kinds of images are for people at times of turmoil. You know, how much "The Statue of Liberty" means to America. So, in spite of the fact that a lot of people won't go to art galleries or won't spend the time looking at them, or, or go to great theatre productions. They'd rather, much rather, you know, see "The Music Man" or something, than "Hamlet" for example. Um, when it, when it comes to reality those things do have a profound effect on people. You know? They, they couldn't wait to tear down that, that wall, the Berlin Wall with its sort of sculptural qualities. So art affects everybody even though they don't think it does. They would never admit it! I went down to the Hudson River last spring, just for a drive with my husband and uh, decided to find out what the Hudson River School was all about (laughs). Why they had this incredible subject matter. And ah, we went to Roosevelt's home and wandered through, and it was all very interesting and they had interacting television which I had never had the opportunity to use. So that was neat. (Louder) But they had a, a sculpture out the front and everyone was talking about it. And they were saying (disdain is implied) "Look at that!" You know, they had a nice sculpture of Roosevelt, probably several other people I didn't recognize; but, they had this broken rock, um, with red spray can painted on it, and uh, wire and and it looked very war torn and people were saying awful things about it. And thought, "I better have a look



at this it's really moving, I mean what is it doing here?" So, I wandered out and I looked at it and it was by the, it was a piece of the Berlin Wall. And it had been sprayed on by kids or young people during the fall of communism or whatever and it was by Sarah Churchill, young granddaughter of Winston Churchill! And I thought, you know, if only people would give it a chance. If only they would come and realize that here was Churchill the man who said that there was a curtain falling over Europe and he was referring to ah, communism and the Berlin Wall. And here his granddaughter is a sculptor making this incredible thing that's fallen and it's really ah --- you know? It was really a very moving kind of a thing to see and, and ah, Roosevelt being the great ah, president during the war. So that was kind of a neat experience; but it, it ah, people were angry about it. People who were wandering by, nice people dressed up in their summer clothes, out touring the homestead and looking at the flowers, and all in a very good mood; but boy when they saw that thing they were quite upset. ... they didn't give it a chance at all. They just wandered right by and said "Awwwww!" You know, you know how people are.

After the interview had concluded and as JW was leaving, she stopped and repeated her concern that her

stories might not be the sort of information that I would need for this study: "I'm not a terribly deep person, I don't think. And I certainly don't come up with sort of an academic Art History jargon ... it's just there."

## Appendix F

Interview #2

The second interview occurred on Thursday March 28, 1996 from 2:30 p.m. until after 4:00 p.m. at the Burlington Art Centre. JW arrived punctually at 2:30 p.m.

The interview was conducted in the researcher's office because the intended location for the meeting, the Fireside Lounge, had been taken over for a special event and was not accessible. The office is approximately eleven feet by thirteen feet. It is a comfortable room with lots of table and desk space. Two walls are dominated by large picture windows which have a view of Lakeshore Road and Lake Ontario. The rest of the wall space is used for bookshelves and a variety of art posters, postcards, and charts. Because of its size and location, it is also used by staff and volunteers, occasionally, for meetings and special work projects. We sat in one corner facing the walls with posters - one of which JW referred to during the subsequent conversation, Honoré Daumier's "A Clown."

We began by discussing the preparation that JW had done for the first interview; she said that she had not done any. She asked whether the first interview was adequate for my purposes. I said yes and assured her that I wanted her to talk to me in a manner that was as natural to her as possible.

~~JW~~ appears to be genuinely concerned that her stories are what I "want" and need for this research. She has asked this before, is it politeness? I wonder if she is puzzled by this process in the same fashion as she was puzzled by those pre-university studio instructors' comments about her drawings and paintings?

I asked her if there was anything from the previous meeting that she wanted to revisit or amplify. She was quick to talk about the idea of visual art as a special "gift from the past." A painting by a member of the Group of Seven, for example, is as it was for the artist and all the people who have viewed it during the decades since it was created.

This is an important issue for JW. She makes the point more than once (the "thousands and thousands and thousands" comment from the first interview) and it is the first thing she brings up today. It also reflects a traditional value for art within the art profession - works that "stand the test of time" are potential masterworks. JW has assimilated traditional values for the visual arts.

Next she described a recent experience with some prints by Picasso at the Art Gallery of Ontario. She talked about spending a long time looking at them and the "incredibly

beautiful lines" that just flow around the form and over the paper. She had had the same experience with a Constable exhibition during the summer of 1995. This was an exhibition of small drawings of landscapes and rural buildings. She recounted her enjoyment of these little images by describing her appreciation of the artist's mastery of the drawing medium, lines, composition, and evolution of style. She indicated that she had recommended this exhibition to several people but that not very many people were very impressed by it. She thought that "looking at drawings is a special, a special thing ... because there is no colour involved. And I think a lot of people respond to colour." This led to the comments that some people "off the street" probably think that drawings are simply a preparation for paintings and that people with more sensitivity and more knowledge would be more likely to be interested in drawings because they would have more experience with art and more understanding of the potentialities of drawings.

I asked JW if these sorts of experiences (Constable, Picasso, Campin, da Vinci, and so on) had resulted in a change in her opinions regarding the visual arts ... how would she say they had affected her?

JW:           You become more appreciative of things the more you see. The more artwork you look at, the more you can appreciate what people are doing. I mean look at

this Daumier [points to a poster of "The Clown" by Honoré Daumier on the wall], you look at those kinds of things and you look at Picasso's drawings and you look at Constable's drawings, and then you start to go around the classes of ordinary people on my level who are drawing and you can appreciate what they are trying to do, you can appreciate their skills developing, growing, ... so I think it enriches your experiences of everyday ... it changes how you relate to everything, I guess.

*This is a classic technique in art education. You are exposed to works that are generally regarded as well done and important and then you can appreciate, or judge, lesser works through comparison.*

I asked if JW could recall any experiences that had occurred before her university experiences and prior to the "puzzling" which had helped to motivate her decision to return to school.

JW: I think that a lot of the things that I saw before I studied, I didn't really understand, I didn't really appreciate, I didn't know what to look for. You can respond to things just on a gut level, just respond to something ... but the more that you know about it, the more your response will be complex and you will, sort of get more hits from it. You know? You do. You,

you, you sort of look at it and, "Ah man, look at that. Ah man, okay?" You know? I mean, that's, that's flash out. and you can --- . You absorb so much, at once and then, then they start, sort of filter down and, into the levels, the meaning that you use, that, that once, once you look at a painting and you respond, quickly and immediately to it. Then afterwards you just start filtering the whys and the wherefores but then you're not, you're not saying to yourself the whys and the wherefores because, because --- you appreciate maybe, you appreciate more things about it because you recognize more things? --- I think that everybody, everybody will respond in some way, if you set something visual up in front of them. I think there are very few people who would, sort of, not have any response to something, would either like it or dislike it. But I think what happens when you study painting and drawing, when you've read a lot of art history or studied [laughs] (unintelligible). You have more levels of, of understanding, comprehension that you can fall back on and appreciate.

I'm sure there are ... those people who will do all those kinds of things ... incredible genius in a lot of people that they, they really do have a sensitivity to things without having a lot of academic knowledge and degrees. 'Cause people do and I think

that's one of the things that separates artists from the rest of the population. Because they have a sensitivity to life and to what's going on around them and how society is changing. They have more sensitivity to colour and light, I think, than most people. And the fact that they can get training in those things really builds on that, makes a difference too. [pauses] ... [There are] people who can go to an art exhibition and come out and not remember anything that they've seen, not remember, not have felt very much at all, not have responded. ... [laughs] there are a lot of them around and um, that's a shame --- But I think there are people you could take out of ah, an ordinary life style who have had no training in art and take them in and they'd understand what they see ... I don't know. I guess what I'm saying is everybody's sensitivity is different."

*Why did she go this way with the conversation? Maybe because she is very relaxed and enjoying the conversation. It is an informal, friendly exchange of ideas. She is following her own train of thought and meandering down her memory lane. Why would she only answer the question that I want her to address?*

We continued to discuss the special abilities of some people to respond to art and to life and the effects of



training... I wanted to hear more of her opinions on the innate human capability to appreciate artworks and the effect of a visual arts education.

JW: ... You can do a lot of it by training. I remember one of the first art classes I took. Ah, when artists would start talking about colour and shape and trees and light and dark in landscape. And I would go out and it was just like seeing the world anew! It was such a, a godsend. I knew that was there but I never saw it before. I never saw the sunlight bouncing off the trunk of the tree --- I didn't realize there was so much difference ... I needed someone to point it out and I think most people do.

*This is a change in her perception of things - trees, light, landscape, in the world. She heard artists talk about what they saw and then, using that information, she was able to see and appreciate her perceptions differently.*

The conversation continued, becoming more generalized, eventually we talked about worldviews of individuals. I described myself as an idealist and optimist. JW then recounted a recent experience that reflected her current sense of herself and a recent change.

JW: ... I belong to the University Women's Club and our guest speaker the other night was a young

woman who is a psychologist. ... she was talking about some system in which people are divided into four categories - blue, orange, and green, and red or whatever it is. And they are - for the purposes of understanding of ordinary people they are divided into animals - there's the owl, the beaver, the dolphin, and, I forget the other. Um, and ah, their characteristics are ah, rational, ah, a guardian, um, the idealist, and the final one which is the artisan. And [sighs]. So she divided us into groups. She said, "I don't want you to think about it too much. I want you to respond and go quickly to the table where you feel you fit in." And I thought, "I, I can't help but deny it, I am, in the idealist category." Because I believe that people are basically good and kind and want (laughs), you know. Society has pressed them into this position where they're forced into, well, murdering people, or robbing banks, or taking drugs or whatever there is. And um, but, -- the older I get and the more rationally I look at life, I kind of think, I don't know --- I was too idealistic, you know? It's crushing to realize that maybe people don't have that basic goodness, or that ability to understand art, or that ability to listen to music and feel

profoundly moved. [louder] Maybe it just ain't there! That's really hard to face.

*Is she saying that rationalism is the opposite of idealism? I immediately think of rationalism and emotionalism and idealism and pessimism as pairs. Or what about idealism and realism? This may be closer to her meaning. Realism and rationalism may be very closely linked for her. JW seems to be regarding a rational perspective as significantly different from idealism not necessarily as an opposite. And she has linked rational to ageing and implied that idealism is a youthful perspective. Has she really changed from idealistic to something else? Or is she in the midst of transformation? She was "too idealistic," now she is somewhat idealistic and somewhat rational. She seems to be trying to reconcile those non-conforming actions, murder, robbery, etc., with her existing idealistic meaning perspective.*

I asked her if she could recount any recent event or experience that might have contributed to this sense of her idealistic versus rationalistic attitude.

JW: It's just been in the last three or four years that I've sort of started to, [with emphasis] not really re-assess, um, because I'm

not really, I'm just allowing a little glimmer that maybe, maybe my idealism is misplaced. Um, I guess I, partly I'll bet it's because its so much, um, television coverage of what is bad in the world, and so much newspaper coverage of um, terrible things that are happening and you don't, you don't get that goodness being reinforced to the degree that, that the, that the dark side of life is being pushed on you and maybe I'm being overly influenced by the influx of heavy duty stuff. But there is so little space you can turn um, to share that kind of idealism [laughs] that you and I obviously have about the world. Um, there are very few people and there are very few places that you can go. I think probably church can fulfill that need, for a lot of people. People don't go to church. People don't talk about things that way. ... [voices rises] But how does that relate to the visual arts? I think it relates because I think there are some people who will never, spring to the level that other people have no matter how long you talk to them or how many exhibitions you take them to or how many books they read.

*There has been an erosion of her idealism - a flood of bad news in the media and a lack of*

*reinforcement for her positive views of the world. The change is still in progress. There is a large part of me that wants that change to stop, to be reversed. That idea "you reap what you sow" comes to mind - her idealism will inspire idealism in others. And I want art galleries, artists, and artworks, at least some of them, to be part of this inspirational cycle.*

I returned again to my concern with the effects of education and the natural potentials of individuals. I asked JW about the group of individuals who were in her class, were they all going to end up being significantly more sensitive and would they all be able to understand art significantly better after taking the same program she did? Or would some of them not have the quite the capability and others have more capability so that the effect of the education on them would be different?

JW:           Yeah, I think it would be different for each one of them. I have a lot of students in the courses who had sort of divided loyalties. It's always a struggle for young people when they're very strong in the scientific and mathematical side and also very strong and very keen about the humanities and they talk back and forth; "Shall I become an accountant, shall I stay in Computer Sciences, or should I give in to my other side and

indulge myself in literature or philosophy?" And because I had two children who in effect showed the same characteristics and I'm all one side, I'm very weak on the scientific and mathematical side; they interest me, but I don't pursue those skills, so it was easy for me, but my children were both torn back and forth and I've noticed it in a lot of students. What I used to say to them was, "I would keep up both of them as much as you possibly can because that makes you unique, it makes you very special and when you go out into the world you have two things to offer. You have something that's different from everybody else and there are fields where you can apply both sides. A lot of them have taken Art History courses because they thought they are what are called "bird courses" and they would get in, they would find out a whole different language that they had to learn, there were things they had to memorize flat out and it shocked them and they then realized that it was harder, that it wasn't just frivolous, that to understand it's not easy; you could put a lot of hours into writing an essay about Italian painting, you could put a lot of hours into writing about an artist and that they couldn't just throw in anything, but it really did matter

how well it was done and that surprised them, a lot of them; they'd sort of go away and shake their heads and say "I'm getting 96 in my Computer courses; why are you giving me a failure in this?" And that was very hard for them to come to terms with, that it wasn't a bird course.

And a lot of students in the Drama courses were people who were involved in Commerce, and Business, where they were taking the courses because they felt standing up and acting would help them in a business situation which it probably would have, if they would be projecting their voices and their characters and talking in front of people, so it was very well worth it for them; then they would discover, much to their surprise, that they were finding things out about themselves, that it was fun. They loved it, they were working with people in a group and if they let down their side, that the whole thing would collapse and everybody would be left with egg on their face and that you had to do your part or it wasn't going to succeed, whereas if they were working in their other courses on the other side, it was just singular, so there was a lot for them to learn. And a lot of them changed, I think, a lot of them moved to a greater understanding; in fact, I think that all students at university should take two or three Humanities credits somewhere along

the line and then you can go and study computers or business, or whatever other courses there are offered and not ...

R: I think we should all be at school forever.

JW: Yeah, because you know, it's so stimulating to learn - I don't know, does everybody feel that way? ... If someone tells me something I don't know, I think "Isn't that great; I didn't know that, that's wonderful." I'm tempted to just go back and just take courses for the sake of being fed. But maybe that's, maybe you get dependent on this too, I don't know.

R: I don't know. I think you can certainly learn from many different sources and many different ways, so if you shut out other learning opportunities, only to go school, maybe that wouldn't be very good, but it's pretty hard to do that. Depending on what kind of learning you enrol in, if you're saying, if you only went to lectures and became dependent on being fed through a lecture, that's one thing, whereas if you go to university and you're given lectures and you're asked to write a paper and to do research and to do other sorts of activities, it's not so ...

JW: ...narrow.

*I really like her suggestion that all students ought to take humanities courses when they are*



*involved in their post secondary education. Would their lives be richer? Would the world be a better place? I believe so.*

*I think that JW and I have similar views on a number of education and art concerns. Our conversations feel natural - we interject and sometimes she adds words to my sentences. Having to maintain two attitudes during the interview was distracting. It is easy to be immersed in the content and flow of the ideas; but, trying to keep a part of my mind apart and aloof from the conversation was awkward. I think that my attitude in most day-to-day conversations is much less attentive, more free flowing and self-centred.*

I wanted to direct the conversation back to my earlier question about her experiences before university so I asked her to focus her memory, her attention on experiences with artwork prior to those [experiences which we have touched on], between high school and before she started serious questioning. Could she recall experiences with artwork or thoughts that she had about artwork in that kind of in-between zone and could she can you tell me anything about them?

JW:           You know what, there was a man named K\_\_\_  
D\_\_\_ who had an art gallery in Burlington. When  
we moved to Burlington, he was the only art

gallery in Burlington and I remember going in because I was interested in looking at paintings, it was convenient to my husband's office and I was in and out working at that time, but I went in because it was an art gallery and there was a painting, which I ultimately bought, which I looked at and loved instantly and I have it hanging in my living room and I haven't thought of it in connection with this talk, but now when I think about what it was that I liked about that painting, I remember talking to a person and that person had come into measure my living room for drapery and she asked and she said what was it I liked about it and I remember pointing out to her things that I would point out now; I would, there were two children poking around in water, it's a Ron Oakey painting, now he went, ultimately his work became quite commercial and quite ..., but this painting is quite lovely; there's two children standing in a triangular form, they're about ten years old, poking in the water and I think I first loved it because it reminded me of my brother and I playing up at the cottage poking sticks in the water, getting clams and digging holes in the sand and so I think at first when I looked at it, it had that sort of common bond,

that charm of childhood, that kind of emotional appeal to it, but when I talked to this woman, I remember saying, "Well, look at the triangle shape of the children and then look how the sticks that they have form another triangle, and I started explaining all this to her and the artist's brush strokes are very horizontal, and there's a wonderful curve that goes around like, almost as if they're standing on a point; I remember telling her this, and she said to me at the time, "How do you know all that?" and I said, "I don't know how I know it," but there was a wonderful morning light about it and now that I think about it, and I look back and I think I was probably about 27 or 28 at the time and I had only painted at home and had taken art classes in high school and in fact had been encouraged to go to Ontario College of Art by my teacher, and the things I said to her are the things I would say to a person now, having acquired all that knowledge, so we go back to "are there some people who have an instinctive sensitivity?" and when I think about that one painting, talking to that woman, and how surprised I was when she said to me, "How do you know all that?" There must be something instinctive in me that wasn't instinctive in her because she was

surprised that I would say this, so that was one experience that I had.

I remember standing in the hallway looking at "Northern River"; I think I mentioned this before, when I was at public school looking at "Northern River," and being kind of dazzled by this sparkling quality of the stream in the Group of Seven's work. Looking at it and thinking, "Isn't this wonderful, it was tumbling, and lacelike and tall trees and the river going across" and just being enchanted by that. I didn't have a lot of experiences with gallery-going when I was in my twenties. I don't think I did until I went back to university, then it sort of all started together and it got an incredible momentum, and yet you see it's a shame because I lived in Toronto, I was going to Ryerson, I used to wander through what was known as the Village in the '60s and just wander through the streets and the coffee houses, go and see Francois Truffaut movies and yet at the period the concern with the arts was coming out on another form. But I was in Toronto when Harold Town and the Painters Eleven were exhibiting everywhere and I could have gone into all the galleries and I could have gone into the Roberts Gallery and picked up a Milne painting for \$300, I missed it all. I didn't know about it. You see you need somebody maybe to point it out. You need someone

to say, "You can go and look, you don't have to pay to get in, you can just walk in the door," or if I picked up a newspaper and, you know, been astute enough to read art reviews instead of movie reviews, somehow I missed it all. That's a shame too, you know, that can happen to a lot of people who, I guess it's called missing the boat, but I went in another direction, I had a really neat fun-filled career in broadcasting, but the arts didn't get a lot of attention because I didn't know, I didn't know it was there, I didn't know how exciting it was, maybe it was just being overwhelmed by so many other things, growing up and theatre and the ballet and we'd go to movies, and we'd all sit around and discuss and I don't know how we ever got through, we sure didn't do any work. But it was, maybe if one area of art gets closed off for a person who has that kind of sensitivity or creativity, maybe if you said to an artist who shows great talent at ten years old, "I'm going to take all these pencils and pens away from you, I'm sorry you can't have any paper," maybe that child would develop in another creative way, maybe it sort of pushes out, and for me it was coming out in movies, and maybe if I hadn't had access to all these incredibly creative people and I was pretty much the only girl in that course, there were a couple of other girls, and about 20 or 30 young

men-and I was pretty much the only girl, I don't know we just all hung out together, and I'll bet if you had taken the movies away, most of us would have found some other creative outlet. It just happened that this one was accessible and interesting and there, so I followed along that path. And then when that closed down, when I stopped working, being in broadcasting, started raising children, and just didn't work, that's when I started to turn back to painting again.

*How instinctive were JW's explanations of the Oakey painting? She had acquired some art knowledge at high school - probably better than average if her teacher had encouraged her to go to the Ontario College of Art. I suspect that she also had had more experience with art making than the average elementary school student too. Remember that she and a few friends spent lunch (or recess) time painting together. The accumulation of these experiences may have created a body of knowledge that grew so naturally and gradually that JW was not aware of it as acquired knowledge, as something given to her. She may regard it as innate because it has been part of her for so long.*

*I think that the changes to her life, raising children for instance, are important markers, maybe influences, on the development of her interests,*

values, and opinions. I see parallel experiences in my life and can imagine them in others. There were fundamental changes in what I thought was important after I became a father. In addition, there were more mundane changes in my daily life which affected my decisions and growth. JW lists raising children, not working as a broadcaster, and starting to paint again as connected experiences, events that are linked on the path that she followed/lived. These experiences changed her and as she changed she chose different experiences. The changes were not seamless; but they do not appear to be sharply separated - I see them as having an interconnected and interactive relationship.

R: And you were saying in the broadcast program you had decided to talk about Canadian art.

JW: Yeah - I'm talking first of all, when I worked in broadcasting after Ryerson until I got married, and then I stayed home with my children, and then when the children were about 11, I went back, and that's when I did the program about Canadian art. Somehow, it had percolated away and I had been taking drawing and painting classes with Gerry P\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, had been out to Dundas for a couple of courses, so because the

broadcasting and the theatre had been cut-off, I guess, this was easy, you could do this, it didn't take a lot of time, it didn't take six weeks of rehearsal and four nights of performance, you could do it when you wanted to, take classes during the day when the children are at school, so things guided me in that direction. It would be interesting, though, to think how many artists would find another outlet and they couldn't paint. What they would do. Where they would turn to? I think, if you think about it, women who were pioneers were isolated on farms and would turn to sewing and quilt-making and embroidery and rugs, incredible crafts and things that we now seek out and they were a creative outlet; carving for the men.

R: Or inventing little gizmos.

JW: Farmers are very great at inventing little gizmos. Our cottage was in Haliburton, these wonderful old characters on the farms and they did, they had latches, and gate fixtures and tractors that they had put together and things to open and close doors; you know, they were very creative. And I bet if you'd given them a paint brush or a piece of paper, they would have shown some artistic bent somewhere. Maybe you're right, maybe everybody has a creative quality.



I changed the topic. I was thinking that JW believes that the art experts know the truth about artworks, that though she may accept that there is a wide variety of interpretations, the best interpretations are those of the experts.

R: Another thing that I was interested in, and I may come back to you about this another time as well, but right now, I wonder, I started to get the idea that when you were talking about art history and professors and academics talking about art, that there was an implication that they had almost, like they had the right answer, or they had the right answers about interpretation of a work or knowing what it was about and things like that, and I'm wondering whether you encountered Professor A and Professor B talking about artwork C, and disagreeing?

JW: I don't think I remember any professor disagreeing with another because they would be slotted into categories, one would teach Canadian art, another would teach Renaissance, another would teach Baroque art, and I never was in a position where they were in the same room and the same time discussing the same subject, so I don't remember that. Do I remember disagreeing with

them?--I'm afraid I would accept almost everything they told me, holus-bolus for a long period of time. I had a great deal of respect for them, just because they had their Ph.D.'s or their M.A.'s or they had been in more galleries than I had, or they had seen more paintings, they'd travelled Europe, they'd been to the Uffizzi, you know, I mean, they just knew, so I didn't have the opportunities to disagree with them, because I was coming at it from a very naive sort of perspective, not maybe a naive, but an un-academic, unknowledgeable, so I couldn't disagree with them, because I didn't have enough basic background. A lot of students would argue that black was white, you know, give me a break. There were a lot of really opinionated, kind of idiotic statements thrown around by the students. I'm afraid I had far too much respect, maybe it was just my background growing up, but I ... there were a lot that I found were silly twits and arrogant sometimes, but I didn't disagree with them, and I didn't really notice them disagreeing with each other. Opportunity didn't present itself. I did notice, however, that they were very jealous of each other's marking; I remember one time talking to a professor and he said to me

"A C from me is as good as an A from so-and-so," right? "So-and-so is an easy marker, and don't base too much of your impression of yourself on what you get from him; he just gives everybody an A; I on the other hand, really am judgemental and I'll turn out a good student, so stick with me, kid, and you'll be a good art historian." So they were really protective of their realm in a lot of ways and I sort of twigged on that kind of professional jealousy. There is that sort of ...

*What kind of learner was JW when she went back to school? She describes herself as accepting "almost everything" and having a "great deal of respect," maybe "far too much respect," for the professors at university; however, she was in middle life, intelligent, and inquisitive. She had raised her children, worked as a broadcaster, and had returned to school seeking answers to questions that were puzzling her - to which she had given some careful thought. I think she was a student with significant motivation, maturity, and mental ability. I wondered about how critical she was.*

R: That's true, and I've encountered it. I'm wondering whether, essentially, I'd like to get around to the idea of now that you've gone through that, and you go to look at artworks, can you imagine two

different people with a significant level of experience and knowledge about artwork disagreeing about the value or importance of a particular work? You can imagine that, right, that two people would have different opinions, even though they might be both experts, of some sort? And so, I wonder, what do you think about that theoretically, I mean, is there room in the art world for more than one evaluation, so there's more than one right answer?

JW: Oh, there are millions of right answers. It just, everybody sees things differently, everybody has their different criteria, I'm talking about specialized ... I mean everybody has a sort of focus that becomes part of them and you can take two highly-qualified people and put them in front of the same painting and they would come from with a whole, you could argue for hours about what it means, what is essential about this painting, what it is and what it is the artist is trying to tell us, or what information comes from it, whether the artist has used the materials well, that they've made their statement concisely or whether it's unresolved or resolved or overworked or whether the colours are muddy, all the kinds of things are judgemental, so I could conceive of 15 people standing around and coming up with 15 valid

opinions on the same painting. I don't think there's one. And I bet if I went back to see every painting I've ever seen, my impression, my feeling about it would be different on a different day. In fact, you asked me to write a couple of little things, and I wrote, essentially what I said was that I had had this bus trip through Harlem, that we'd had a tour of the Cloisters, that I had gone off on a solo walk for fun, I thought it was such a neat place, you know, I was childlike, and I was kind of playing sandcastle, I went off on a stroll ... and then I encountered this painting and I wondered, and my closing paragraph is, "What caused that profound experience with that painting?" Had it been lined up on the walls at the Uffizzi, would I have passed over it, or was it because I'd come through this awful Harlem experience on the bus, and because I'd just done this tripping out, kind of Hippie thing, wandering around, and then come across the painting? Isolated in a stone room, and it glowed ... like some kind of colourful vision hanging on the wall. I don't think my experience of that painting would have been quite the same if it had been in the gallery in the Metropolitan, lined up with a thousand other

pieces, in rooms where I was jostled by other people, or if I had had three or four companions with me, people, you know, rushing me through, or looking at something else, or looking at the painting with a variety of opinions about it, so everything that, everything that, of you affects how you react to the painting. And if you're in a bad mood, if you're sad, or you've had a fight with your mate, got cheated on your bill at lunchtime, I mean all those things affect how you feel when you come in contact with a work of art. If you took those 15 or 20 people and set them in front of any one work, you would get 15 personalities, 15 love ... or hate it ... or anger and 15 egos; there are a lot of people, myself included, who know it all and who like to put their opinions... I don't know, ...

R: Well, let's pick up on that - the next question is if we've got 15 people and they are talking about a particular work, and you're in the unique position of trying to sort out amongst these 15, all things being equal, what is more important and less important in terms of what they have to say about them, in other words we have differing opinions that are all equally well considered and so on, but it's up to us to somehow try and sort out which we think are more important,

more valid, more truthful. Can you hypothetically imagine, or talk about you might sort out what was more valid, more truthful, from their comments?

JW: I probably would listen quite closely to the person whose opinion differed from mine. If someone said almost exactly the same sort of thing as I was feeling, I would say, "OK, I got that," but if someone said, "no, no, no, I" ... about something else, "this is what's important here, this is what's exciting about this," I would sort of say, "Right, tell me more about what you think about it." I guess, I would like someone to say, "OK, I agree with you," that's good, but at that point I would drop it, because I wouldn't want to listen time and time and time again to what I felt. I would like to hear something new, something different, and if I didn't believe them, I'd be tempted to say, "No, I don't see it that way," "Let's go over that again," but I think I'd kind of like to hear people say ... not if it's outrageous opinions, just unthoughtful, unknowledgeable, then I'd just let it go, but if it was somebody I respected, I would love to hear someone's opinion that is different from mine. Certainly I collect all this stuff. I don't if that's good, what good it does me, I don't know,

but I have to pack it in, pack it in, pile it up

...

R: Well, what effects do you think it has had so far?

JW: It's so enriching, so enriching and so satisfying and so thrilling to be able to, well let's take that Daumier - if I had come in here and did not know who Daumier was or what he was about, I would just look at it and think "That's a really lively drawing, but I don't know whether I would have been able to figure a whole lot of things about it, but knowing what Daumier did, and how he worked, I could probably tell you how far along in his career he was, that he was loosened up ... and that's wonderful style and that political satire and stuff all comes, so I think that, you know that makes it so much more exciting to look at than just looking at it and not knowing anything about it.

R: So all sorts of sources, whether they're conventional, parallel to your own knowledge and experience or even divergent, different ones, they can all be used by you to enrich your understanding of your experience.

JW: You know, there are some people in this world who are old and wise and occasionally being interviewed on TV, or you'll read an article or a



book or you'll run into them in your own life and it's that buildup of life experiences and reading and knowledge that makes them so wonderful and then there are bitter old people for whom life has been harsh and they haven't grown a lot and I don't want to end up like that; I want to be able to sit in a room as an old woman and draw on what I've got. You know, if you're crippled or blind, or incapacitated in some way, if you've got something inside that you can draw on, you can get, if they become part of you, I think. The Jewish people during the second world war ... said they can take everything away from me, but they can't take away what's inside your head. And that's such a beautiful thought, that's such a way to live your life, to just develop this interior world, that's yours and yours alone, and you can't, I mean, I'm sharing things with you, and you don't get to talk to people about these things because nobody will listen attentively, but I think it's true that anyone can develop a rich interior life. You sit there and you've got a catalogue of memories and images in your brain and a catalogue of stories that you can draw on and memories that you can just pull out and they're your very own. I think art does that; I think,

you know, lifetime experiences, you can sit and you can remember sitting around the boardroom table and having an argument about whether you should invest x number of dollars in such and such a business or go ahead and build a building, but I think it's equally important that you should have your memories of what Woody Allen called the "wonderfulness of life" that you can draw on and look through. And that's why the visual arts and the performing arts are so exciting. The joy of seeing that Constable exhibition of drawings and the little Picasso prints and the [unintelligible] and I've been to Rubens in the AGO, that's a preliminary drawing for his great ... and that's a wonderful thing and I often think about it, about the power of his drawing skills and the colour that he used on it and how exciting his composition is and how powerful the imagery is; it's filed away in my brain. Who knows when it's going to pop up, you know? You could be driving down the street and see a lamp post tipped over at the same angle as the [unintelligible] and all of a sudden it floods back into your brain; it's kind of neat.

*Others opinions which extend her understanding of art and artworks are important to JW. She wants*

to explore new ideas. Not any or all new ideas. She has criteria - they must be thoughtful and knowledgeable ideas. She is still hungry for knowledge and apparently prepared to be critical. She strikes me as living the life-long learning slogan and developing complex, varied, and rich memories. I wonder if she will extend her interests to less traditional, classical, sources? She is an entertaining story teller now.

## Appendix G

## A Written Account of the Experience at the Cloisters

A Visit with Madonna

Our great grey bus protected us from the harsh realities of life as it lugged its weight through the streets of Harlem. Inside the bus a silence fell over the excited group of Burlingtonians. The raw emotions of citizens who live lives far different from our own challenged our sensibilities with aggressive street art. Walls, windows and sidewalks were plastered with texts and images, bold and mostly black.

The Cloisters, a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a fortress of medieval (sic) civilization preserved, is set in this area of tragedy and decay.

An elegant New York socialite toured us through the chapels, halls, arcaded [sic] cloisters and courtyards, pointing out columns and capitals, tapestries and ivories. Suddenly our tour was over and we were left to solo for half an hour.

I harboured an urge to wander about alone to capture the spirit of a monastic life. "Why not?" I thought, "There's time enough for the gift shop." I set off on a quest for understanding of silent vows and lifetime devotion.

With head slightly bowed and hands clasped I wandered the chilled and silent passageways. I felt I really ought to get into the mood of the thing and physical posture and carriage always seemed to help set a characterization for me theatrically.

To the measured tones of gregorian chants I wandered at will. I passed through a narrow doorway into a small stone room. A personal library perhaps. It was furnished sparsely with a large dark oak armoire, and a simple table and chair.

Immediately, instantly, like a flash of brilliant light in the dark, Robert Campin's Annunciation also called the Merode Altarpiece appeared. It just appeared like some vision floating above the table. Had it been there a split second before? Of course it had, but it was so small and so insignificant amid the massive furniture and grey stone walls that it could easily be overlooked.

I was quite physically stunned. Indeed I was awe struck by the glow of the warm, rich rose colour that emanated from the painting.

I knew the work only peripherally. I woul[d] have been hard pressed to remember its title or creator. I had paid little attention to it as I flipped pages in art history texts. I was in fact not interested in northern Renaissance art. Neither did I know that this work was at the Cloisters. My immediate reaction was "Oh my God, look at

that!"

I stood in the doorway, not 10 feet from the three-panel painting. The warmth and power of its radiant colour drew me toward it. It was the Madonna's gown, the largest area of colour in the central portion of the tryptich, that cast the sensation of coloured light in a grey room. The fabric fell in glorious variation of dark and light rose tones and ended in those curious and angular folds so typical of northern painting of the period.

Madonna was seated in the foreground of the painting with the great folds of fabric from her voluminous gown flowing toward the viewer. Around her, the stark white walls of a dutch kitchen and exquisitely painted household items. Beside her the angel Gabriel knelt in profile. A cool northern light passed through two small windows and bathed everything in clear, morning air. The room and the painted figures existed in a world that was at once common and celestial.

I was enchanted by the precision of the modelling of the figures, the transitions of tonality in the fabric and faces and the gentle gradation of colour in the golden pots and candlestick. The finest of brushstrokes melded into one another to create a surface as smooth as enamel through which rich jewel like colours shone. A touch of blue, a hint of green: gems against the white walls or juxtaposed against the rose fabric. I know now, but didn't know then,

that the mystical technique of the artists layering colours rich with linseed oil was the reason for the glowing, deep, vibrant colour. I didn't know that this was one of the earliest oil painting[s] or that Campin was one of the first to break with the stilted but elegant international style and bring religious imagery closer to ordinary life.

I peered at the painting ever more closely attempting to absorb its rare beauty, attempting to enter into the world of northern symbolism, to relate with the figures in the side panels. I wanted to know this complacent madonna and to understand her singular predicament. I studied it all intently; too intently it turned out. I had set off an alarm and was given stern warning by a guard not to breathe on the painting. The spell was broken. The magic moment was over. I returned to a museum world.

How long had I been there? How much time had passed? I didn't know. The mind can play tricks when it is enchanted.

I had learned so much. I had experience[d] the radiance of colour that Matisse was to investigate so diligently centuries later. I had marvelled at the transitions in tonality that Leonardo would carry to perfection. I had been amused by the medievil (sic) artist's struggle with math[e]matical perspective and had thought about how only Cezanne would dare to tilt a table top or floor so effectively.

What had caused my experience with that small painting to be so profound? Was it the contrast with the brutality of Harlem's streets coupled with the spiritual nature of my solitary walk in the cloistered walls? - Was it the joy of discovery of something marvelous and unexpected? Very likely it was all those things but above all it was artistic genius: the ability of one creative human being to speak directly and personally to another human being across the centuries.

J.W.

March 28, 1996